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A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
No.27 APRIL 1986
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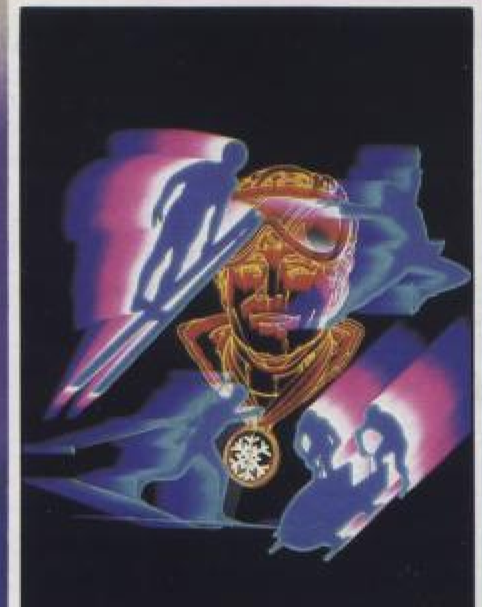
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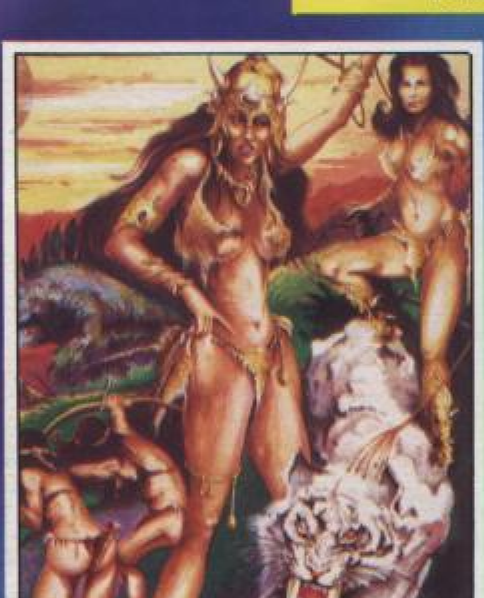
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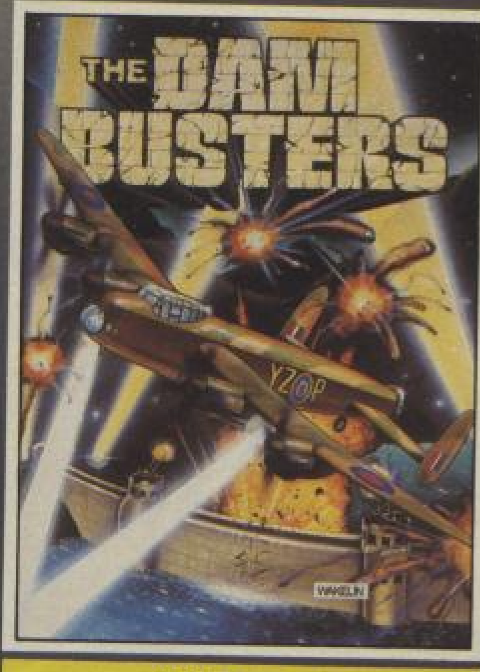
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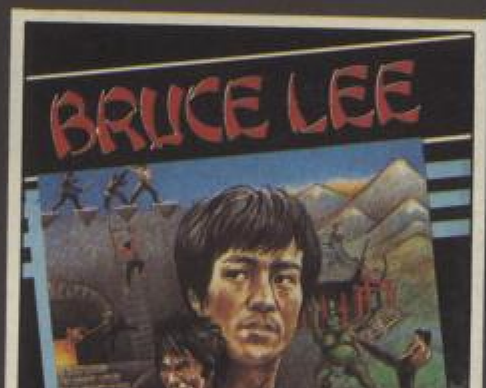
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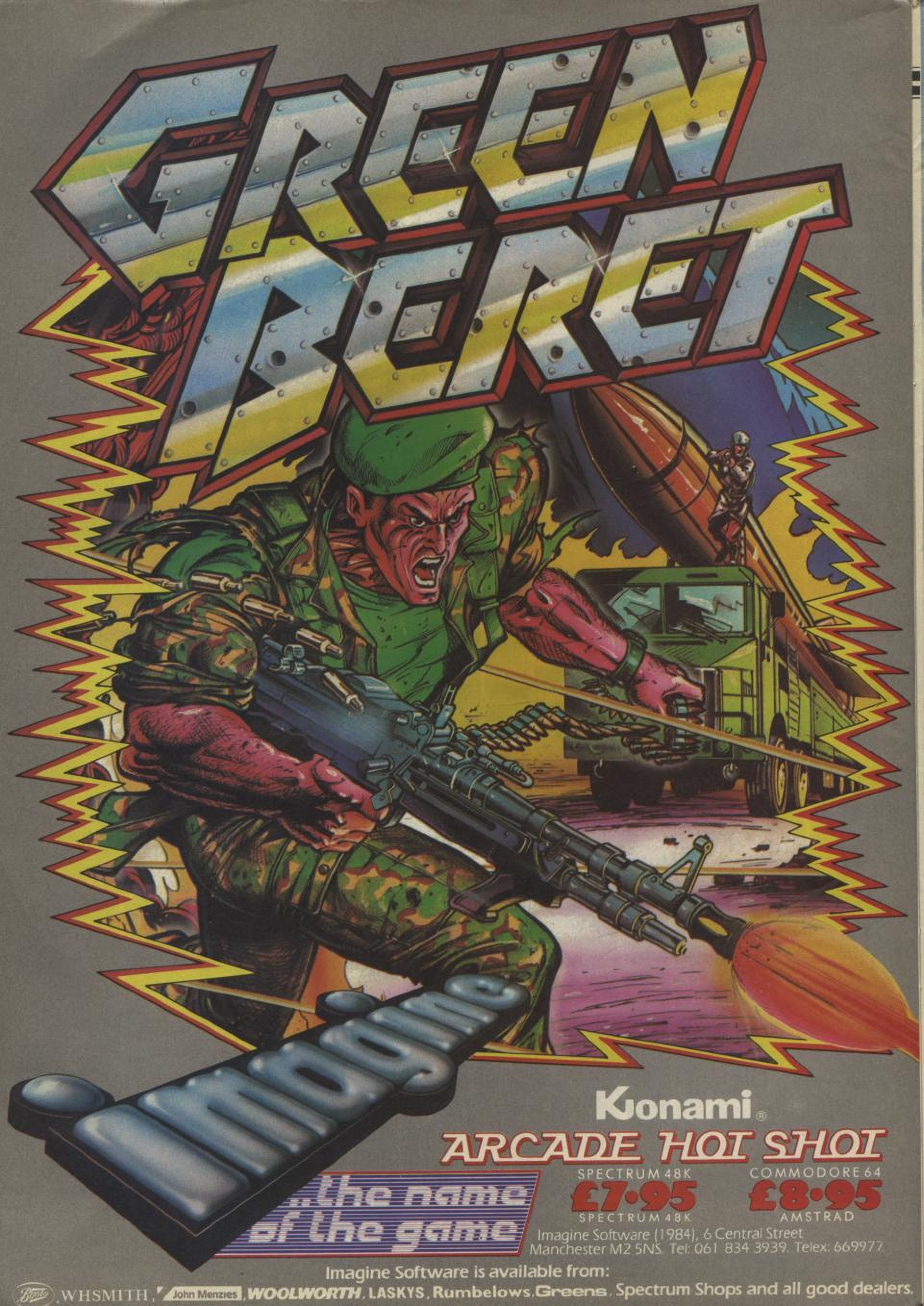
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CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

ISSUE No. 27 April 1986

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Printed in England by Carlisle Web Offset (member of the BPCC Group) Newtown Trading Estate, Carlisle, Cumbria. Colour origination by Scan Studios, Wallace Road, London N1
Distributed by COMAG, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middx UB7 7QE

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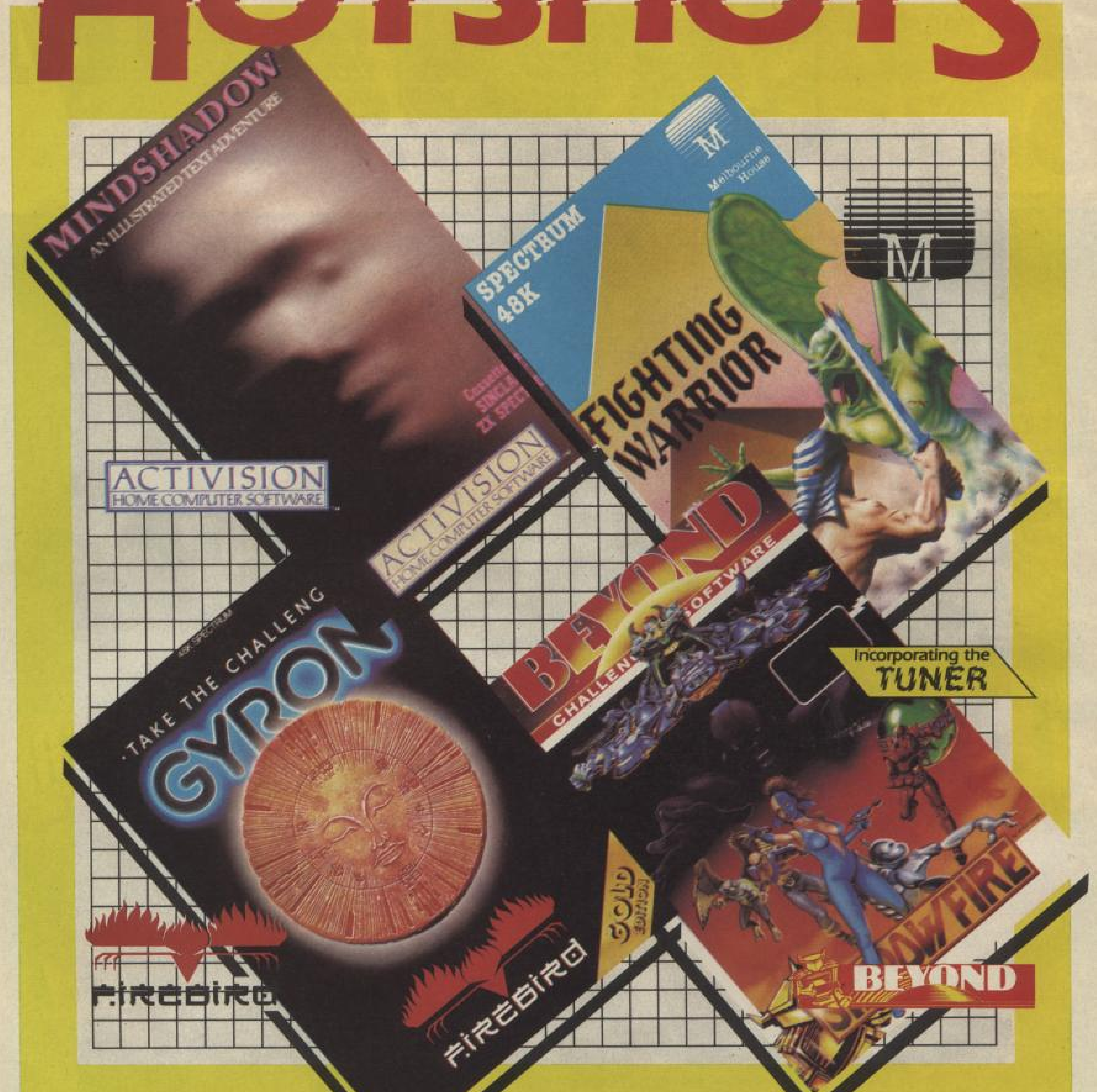


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THE FORCE - bringing game power to your Spectrum £9.99

Welcome to the April issue of CRASH. Yes, the price has risen by five pence but we managed to hold it down to 95p for twelve issues which wasn't bad going what with the rise in material costs, Robin Candy's salary and the general increase in office cleaning and maintenance bills occasioned by the arrival of Gary Liddon!

To soften the blow a little (it's not that much of a blow really — a 1.25p a week increase) there's a whole 24 pages of pullout supplement from Mr C this issue to help you get to grips with the games in your collection. No, CRASH is not going to become a listings magazine (we know you far to well to follow that path). Although the PLAYING TIPS SPECIAL is fairly full of listings, we've sorted out a deal whereby you can obtain a cassette version of the Playing Tips Supplement — without the maps of course. For a special offer price of £1.99 you can save wear and tear on your fingertips. You'll find a coupon in the supplement if you want to order this tape, or just write to Auntie Aggie in the usual way.

This issue, counting the Playing Tips Supplement, contains around 114 pages of editorial material. Everyone in CRASH Towers, yours truly too, hopes we have now redressed the balance over the Christmas Special which has caused some controversy in the FORUM of late. And we've got some respectable goodies planned for future issues, as well.



Graeme Kidd



COLLECTING THE WORKS



After the mad rush of the last four issues in which we awarded more Smashes per issue than we have done for a long time, if not actually breaking all known CRASH records, things have quietened down a bit. Maybe the games that were meant to come out in time to be Christmas hits, but didn't, have now all arrived and we're about to enter into a slightly quieter period as the nights get shorter. Perhaps work for the 128K machine has slowed things down a bit or it's just taking longer to produce a polished game. Who knows?

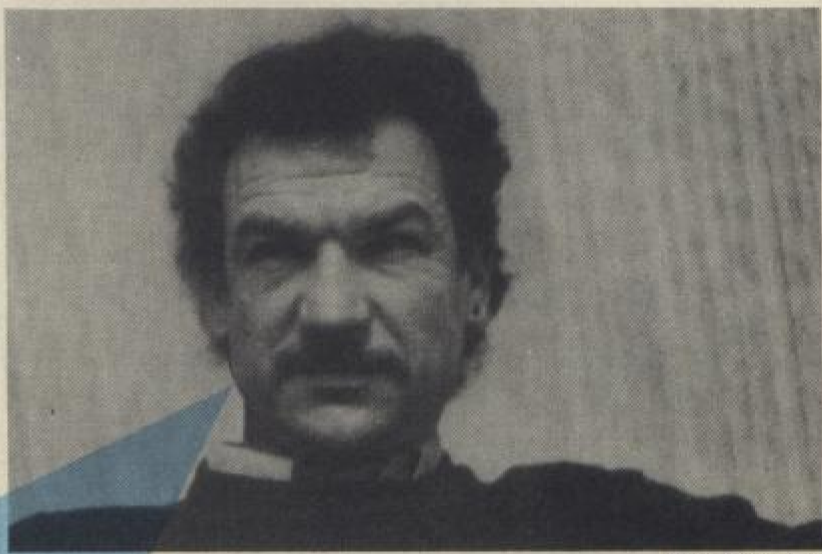
There's still a stack of very promising items just over the horizon, and there's certainly no shortage of material shortlisted for the next issue. But with the rash of compilations that have suddenly been announced within the last fortnight it's tempting to wonder whether the games market might be about to shift emphasis from 'singles' to 'albums'.

Argus Press Software are the latest people to jump onto the compilations bandwaggon, offering no less than thirty titles for £9.95 — that works out at some 33 pence per game. A four-adventure package is on its way from Global, containing a selection of titles that should please Signpost readers, and two charity compilations, one for War on Want and another for the software industry's Off The Hook appeal will appear shortly. Melbourne House, Activision and Firebird are joining forces to launch their own compilations label which kicks off with some very strong product from their combined back catalogues and will no doubt be used as a vehicle for launching the 'didn't quite make it' games from less well-known programmers in due course. Gremlin Graphics have plans for compilations based on CRASH Smashes, Virgin have done good business with their NOW! games compilations and even if THEY SOLD A MILLION didn't, first or second time around, it made a solid impact on the market. The list grows longer.

The Soft Aid compilation was last year's biggest selling title in terms of units sold according to Greg Ingham, type miscaster and sometimes editor of the trade's newspaper Computer Trade Weekly. The Ethiopian Famine Appeal caught everyone's imagination, and the worthy cause behind the Soft Aid compilation no doubt had a great deal to do with its penetration of the market. But it looks like purely commercial compilations are here to stay, partly as a result of the high profile achieved by the Soft Aid album of computer hits.

Could 'albums' be one way in which the price of software, in real terms, is reduced — a plea Lloyd frequently receives in his post. Or will it result in decreased sales of 'singles', a loss in revenue for the people who develop games and a consequent decline in the general standard of games on offer? Heaven forbid, compilations could lead to even higher price tags on new, individual titles which have to pay for themselves on reduced sales before they are compiled into software albums.

GOING STALE?



Mel Croucher

Mel Croucher has a lot to say about the state of the games software industry at the moment — some of his words of wisdom are captured in this very magazine. He is not the only person to comment that games are being released to a pattern — the number of original or different products launched is diminishing as companies are forced into corners where programming ability seems to exceed creative aptitude. Arcade copies abound, and telephone lines are buzzing with conversations about who has got the rights to the latest arcade machine up for grabs.

If one company launches a new type of game, then within a few months four or five more versions are bound to appear — some of them worth adding to your collection as the time lag allows the cloning programmers to make technical improvements. But the level of legal wrangling over precious rights to games and games designs has been on the increase, in direct proportion to the decline in new, innovative game ideas.

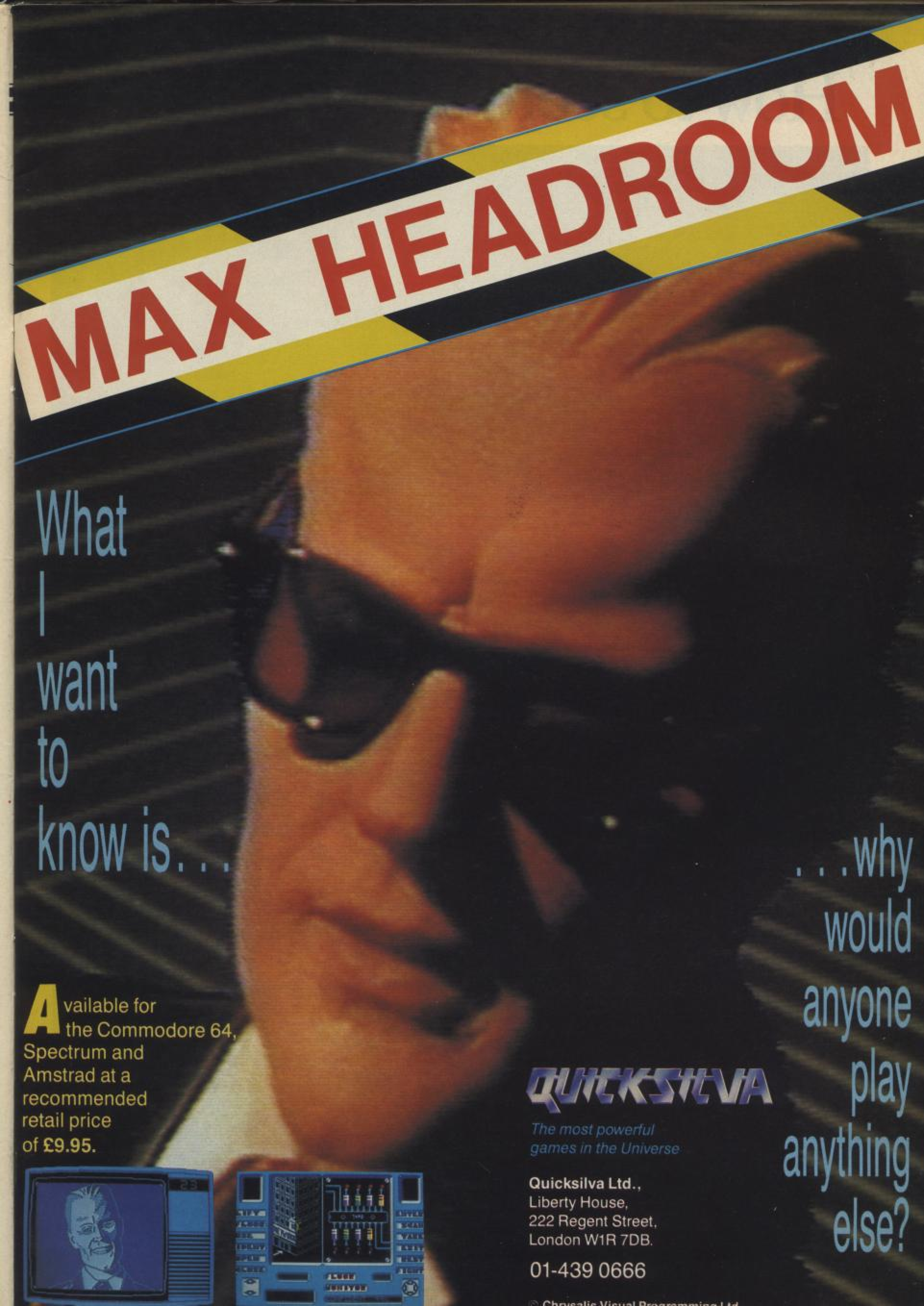
Maybe the greatly reduced number of small, independent and innovative software houses occasioned by the arrival of large, powerful combines with large marketing budgets has led to a decline in creativity. 'Derivative, derivative' Mr Croucher cries pottering off to do his own thing. The games industry could certainly do with a new spark of life. Is the time ripe for a Punk Programming movement?

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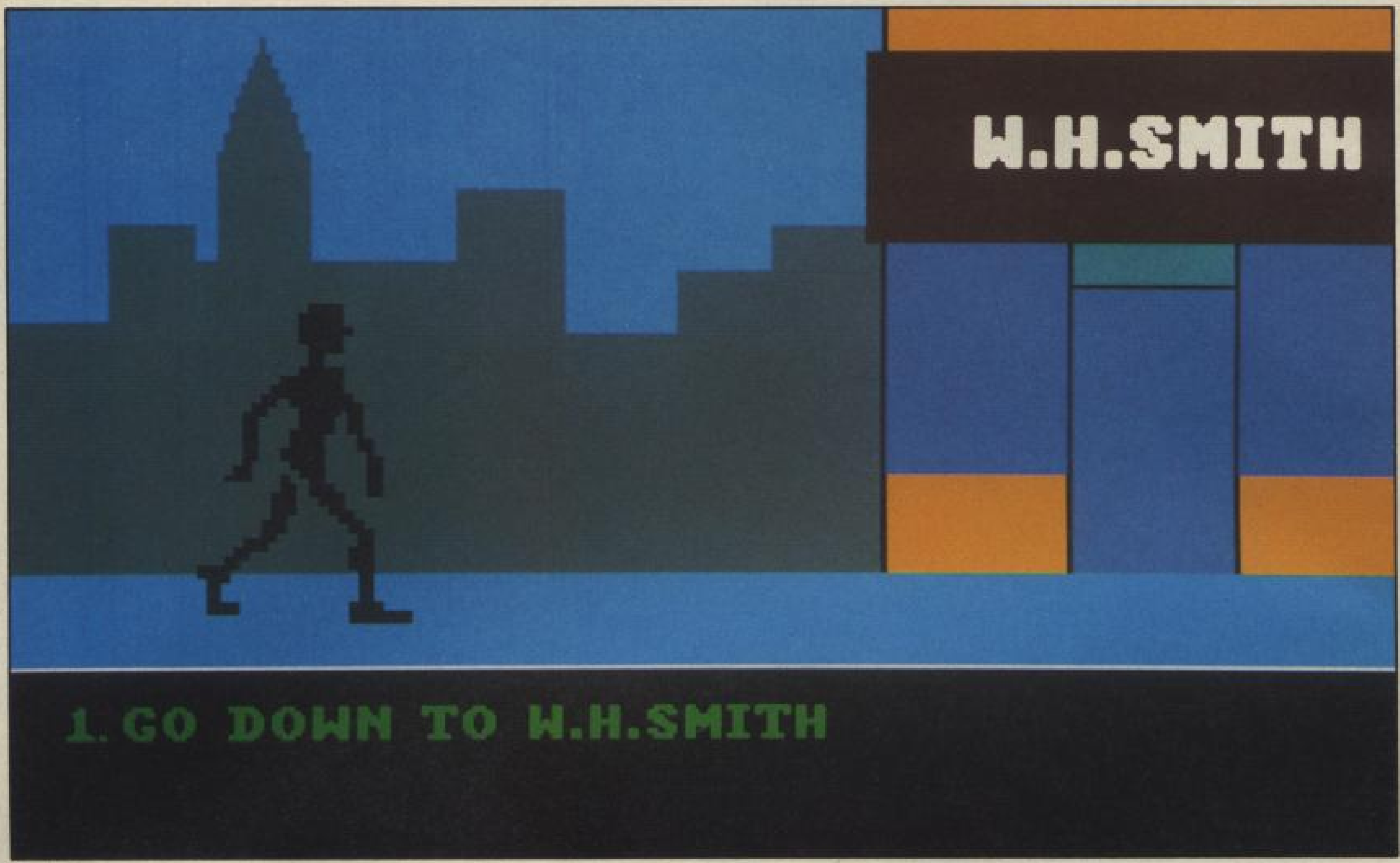


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FEAR AND LOATHING IN LONDON



Our correspondent with the permanent thirst, JOHN MINSON, roams the streets of London in search of free lunches. To justify the cost of shoeleather, he's turned in these few well chosen words . . .

It started at the 128 launch. It was an event cloaked in secrecy — phone calls to Sinclair only elicited the non-committal "Are you phoning about the 13th?" But everyone knew. Every hack worthy of his or her name would be there to see what Sir Clive would pull out of his hat — and we knew what that was going to be, too. But as Graeme had rejected my offer to fly out and sample the delights of the Spanish Spectrum at his expense, I was making do with a blagged invite to the London launch.

True to form, the promise of a major news story, not to mention a free lunch, had lured that assembled body of well-respected journos, the computer press, from behind their desks. Why, I even saw representatives of magazines dedicated to non-Sinclair machines there, so great is the lure of Sir Clive. And, of course, Graeme, all the way from Ludlow looking extremely dapper in best whistle, made an appearance amongst us mortals.

Happily, with Graeme covering the news aspect I was free to adopt my more usual role as food and wine correspondent. (Actually, I lie — I had to take part in that unholy rugby scrum called the photo call, where some highly trained lens-person gets Sir Sinclair into the most unimaginative pose possible, then we all scramble to capture it like it was the Second Coming — which is probably what Clive hopes it is!)

First the wine. Well, wine it was but not a Bloody Mary to be found, which is a pity as the cocktail's colour would have complemented the crimson box of the 128 rather nicely. The food was better. Only canapes, mind — always just a taster for the proper sarnie that should follow but never does — but big, healthy ones with exotic contents. And the little cakies that followed were superb. Sadly for some, the positioning of this spread at the far end of the room went unnoticed until too late. Myself and the other sharp eyed vultures had hardly left a quail egg for poor old Graeme, who had been punctiliously plugging away for stories among the assembled software companies. (And what is the collective noun for such a body? A loading error?)

Not that my seclusion from the trestles had put me out of the running for information. Could it really be that Kempston and Sinclair had known in advance that the most used joystick's interfaces would cause games to crash on the new micro, but had colluded to keep quiet about it until a solution was reached? I don't believe it. Nor was I taken in by the wag from one very large group of companies who whispered that they wouldn't be producing further games for the expanded machine until it had firmly proved itself, which they didn't think it would. Then there were the loading problems that software houses had apparently encountered with their display machines on the day. Poor old Colin-from-Firebird's face *was* pink!

But by that stage it was becoming hazy, the ground was circling, and I recognised the symptoms of alcohol starvation. So I made for fresh air. Suddenly, my way was blocked by a uniformed flunky. Could it be that I knew too much? Luckily I always carry a can of insect repellent with me — a brand known as Mace — and let the tool of the capitalist classes have it, right between the eyes. As he sank to the floor I realised that he'd only been trying to give me my coat. Really must do something about this paranoia.

Chaos reigned. I was forced to let go with a few more blasts of the chemical cosh — purely for self-defence — when a bearded figure fought his way to m 'I'm a doctor, ' he said, 'Let me through'. I was about to blast him when I recognised the face behind the whiskers and the unmistakable shape of the cocktail shaker in his hand. This is the sort of man of medicine I heartily approve of.

He dragged me from the th rong and pushed me into a car which roared off at high speed towards the environs of his consulting rooms in Covent Garden, for it was none other than Dr Tim Langdell of **The Edge**. Here was a man with such faith in the new Spectrum that he was not only expanding *Fairlight* for it by adding better sound, new rooms and secret passages but also a new way of solving the secret of the castle. And that, he confided, would be nothing compared with *Fairlight II* which would be primarily aimed at the larger memory, needing a multi-part load for the small machine.

Then, he told me, administering another medicinal concoction, there would be the long awaited *Writer* — a word processor which is so complete it seems you can choose a style from a pull down box and it will plagiarise an article to fit, rather like this one. And *Artist II* will wash the dishes and make the tea . . . but by this time I was feeling tired and emotional from my day's work so I made an excuse and sought a nightcap.

I woke up the following Tuesday in the vicinity of Fleet Street with a hand on my collar and voice saying, 'You're nicked.' I was in the midst of babbling on about being a journalist and lying in this gutter because I'd just been mugged and coming from a broken home, when I recognised the arresting officer as none other than debonaire Michael Baxter, the most eligible bachelor in computer PR.

He was dragging me down into the dungeons not for reasons of incarceration but to witness the launch of Argus Software's *The Force*, presided over by himself and partner (in crime?) cuddly, bearded Dave Carlos. There are those who might say that a game about the police being a Mind Game is rather a contradiction. In fact, there were those who said it. And — without wishing to induce anti-police attitudes in you impressionable youngsters — I also wondered if there were any miners in the game and whether you got extra points for killing innocent women and children. But Dave expertly fielded all of my whimsical enquiries by hitting me repeatedly around the kidneys with a squeaky plastic truncheon. Obviously the game is educational.

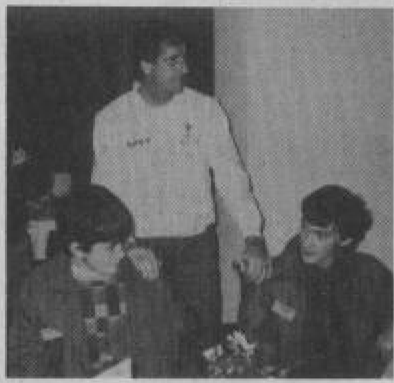
Well, I can't really report on it (did you think I would?) because there was only a Commodore version available and I suffer a terrible allergy to the machines, so I made for the bar and food — an odd mix of cold cuts and lasagne! But I did pick up a bit of info about the Argus *Thirty Games* package, due out soon. It contains bits'n'pieces from all over the Argus Empire — Quicksilva, Bug Byte and more — and while there are some proggies you wouldn't give house room there are enough good things to make it a definite bargain at £9.95 for two tapes.

Another missed opportunity though. Why nobody dressed up in PC's uniform? Dave as the Laughing Policeman? We were well upset. And why no Bloody Marys? Has somebody warned the computing world about me. Never mind, the deadline for this was already gone and Graeme was giving me angry phone calls. I stumbled up the stairs to the snowy Street of Shame when I was hailed from a passing car — a white Corvette. 'Leap in,' said the driver 'we're going to cover the shark fishing championships in Hawaii'. For a moment I thought about the deadline — then leapt into the car which roared off into the London traffic, took a right down a one way street against a red light, and narrowly missed a passing barrister on his way to the Old Bailey from El Vino.

So, sorry Graeme — this is all being typed on a sun-bleached beach in a state of total inebriation and most of it's pure fantasy anyhow. But some of it's true. And that's where it gets weird.

Hunter S Minson

WINNERS RECEIVED AT SPURS



Winning CRASH competitions isn't only a matter of collecting whizzo prizes. Sometimes you become famous, sometimes you meet famous people — all sorts of nice things happen to our prize winners.

Ian Harris, for instance, came out top in the MacMillan Football **competition and had a day out at Tottenham Hotspurs club, along with a few other competition winners. Ian's the guy on the right . . .**

Winners of MacMillan FOOTBALL competitions hob-nob it with Ray Clemence at the Spurs ground

OH! THE GLITTERING PRIZES



Just before Christmas the Newsfield crew stumped off to the InDin, a prestigious industry event in which everyone had lots to eat, Newsfield gave away some awards, a bottle of champagne was auctioned for £14,000 to launch the OFF THE HOOK appeal, and the annual CLIVE AWARDS were presented to worthy recipients in the software industry.

Oliver Frey, for it is he, is pictured handing over the Newsfield Award for THE BEST ALTERNATIVE SOFTWARE to Activision's Clare Hirsch, for it is she. Activision collected the award for *Little Computer People* which will never be appearing on the Spectrum. Shame! In the background John Phillips, Master of Ceremonies for the evening, studies his notes.

MOON CRESTA MASTERS

Ian Andrew of Incentive Software no longer has a Moon Cresta arcade machine sitting in his office. He's given it away! Fans of the game will remember that Incentive offered everyone who scored over 30,000 points on their official micro version of *Moon Cresta* the chance to enter a draw for an arcade machine.

Ian Clark of Newcastle on Tyne was the lucky winner, drawn from over 4,000 entries. "We expected two or three hundred entries," Ian Andrew, Incentive's Big Cheese commented, "and we were stunned to receive so many."



OFF THE HOOK

Following the phenomenal success of the compilation tapes produced for SOFT AID, which raised over £350,000 for Bob Geldof's Ethiopian Famine appeal, Rod Cousens from Electric Dreams is currently putting the finishing touches to a new compilation for OFF THE HOOK.

Launched at the InDin at the end of last year, the OFF THE HOOK appeal set up to raise money for The Prince's Trust to assist in the rehabilitation of drug users. Part of the money raised will also be used for preventative education to help deter people from entering the downward spiral of drug abuse in the first place.

The SOFTAID compilation became the longest running No1 chart success of last year, and was probably the highest selling game title ever. The OFF THE HOOK compilation should be ready by Easter, selling for £6.99. Distributors and dealers have agreed to waive their usual margins, and all the companies and individuals involved in putting the package together have donated their time and products. Around £4.00 of the £6.99 you will be asked to pay for the tape should go to The Prince's Trust — and the collection of games assembled for the Spectrum represents incredible value.

The OFF THE HOOK Spectrum compilation contains: *Pitfall 2* from Activision; *Psytron* from Beyond; *Fall Guy* by Elite Systems; *Sam Stoat Safebreaker* a Gremlin Graphics game; *Ad Astra* from Gargoyle; *Splat* by Incentive; *Mugsy* from Melbourne House; *Kong Strikes Back* by Ocean; *Chequered Flag* from Psion, and US Gold's *Blue Max.*

"We're looking for a high new entry in the Gallup chart," Greg Ingham, one of the Trustees of the appeal commented, "we have high hopes for the OFF THE HOOK collection and expect to see it in the top five during the first week after launch."

Given the collection of Spectrum games on offer, the price and the charitable motivation for the OFF THE HOOK compilation, the trustees of the appeal are unlikely to be disappointed. Go out and buy the OFF THE HOOK compilation now. Go on, off you go.

WOW!

A Spectrum game never before released is amongst the fourteen Spectrum titles on a new compilation put together by War on Want, the charity which campaigns against world poverty.

Rupert and the Ice Palace, 48K's worth of machine code, has been donated by Quicksilva to War on Want's *WOW Games* compilation which is available by mail order from 21st April at £9.95. Money raised from sales will go to assist development work in the Third World — War on Want in involved in long term projects in over thirty countries, helping to combat the effects of malnutrition, ill health and poverty.

Anyone ordering the cassette can ask War on Want to send them information on their work: "Young people in Britain have already shown that they care. Now we hope that they will get a lot of fun out of WOW GAMES and learn something about development at the same time", said George Galloway, War on Want's General Secretary launching the package.

Apart from *Rupert and the Ice Palace,* buyers of the WOW GAMES compilation will receive: *Spectrum Chess II,* Artic; *Bugeyes,* Audiogenic; *Pedro,* Beau Jolly; *Winged Warlord,* CDS; *Mr Freeze,* Firebird; *Headbanger's Heaven,* Llamasoft; *Wizard's Warrior,* Mastertronic; *Hellfire,* Melbourne House; *Hunchback II,* Ocean; *Horace and the Spiders,* Psion/Melbourne House; *Xavior,* PSS; *Cybertanks,* Star Dreams, and *Dr Franky & the Monster* from Virgin.



Another worthy compilation. Make your cheques payable to **WOW (Trading)** and send them to **WOW Games, Room 62A, 1 London Bridge Street, LONDON SE1 9SG. Access and Visa orders phone 01 403 2266 and ask for games!**



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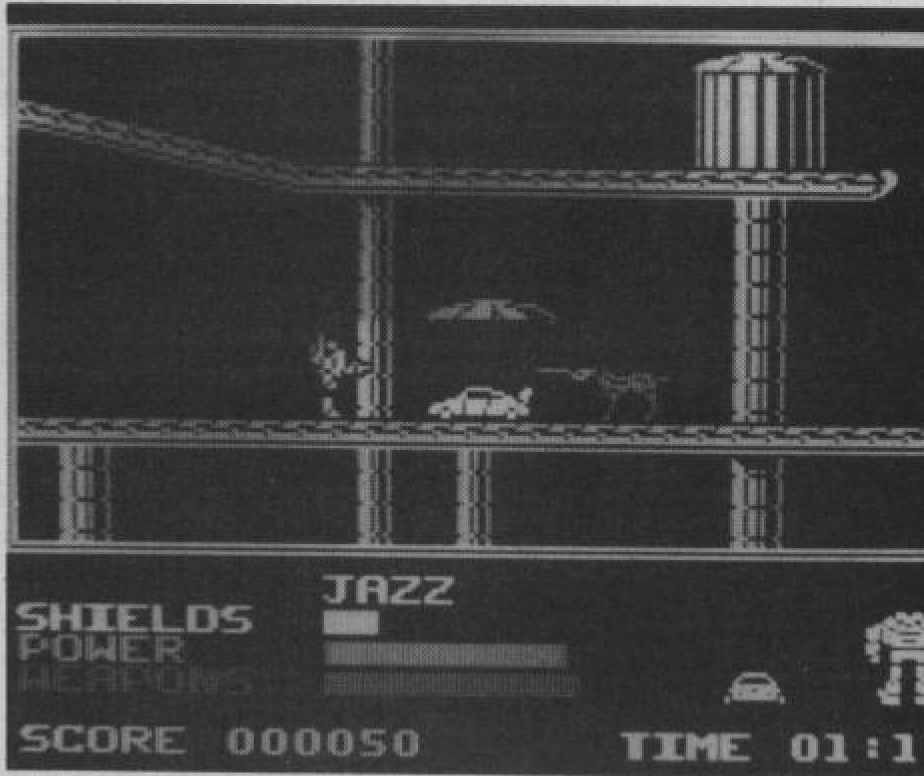
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TRANSFORMERS



Producer: Ocean
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Denton Designs**

Once again life as we know and love it has come under threat from evil minions — this time in the form of the evil Decepticons, Transformer robots which have invaded the planet Earth and are doing their very best to take over.

Only a handful of good guys remain — five Autobots who go by the names Mirage, Optimus Prime, Hound, Jazz and Bumblebee. You takecontrol of the Autobot team and have to find the four parts of the Autobot Energon Cube in order to stave off an energy crisis as well as eliminate the baddies.

Naturally, the invading force of dastardly Decepticons is out to defeat the quintet of heros — to make your life more difficult, the Decepticons have perfected the art of robo-cloning, which allows them to multiply rapidly. If you don't wipe out the baddies quickly, they start popping up all over the place.

The main playing area is presented in a large window which occupies the top half of the screen, and flips as you move off the edge of the current screen. Below the action area is the status panel. At the start of the game the five Autobots are nestling within Defensa Pods and five icons are ranged on the bottom of the screen. To take control of one of the team, you have to move a cursor over the appropriate Autobot's icon and press fire, where upon one of the Defensa Pods opens to reveal your chosen combatant.

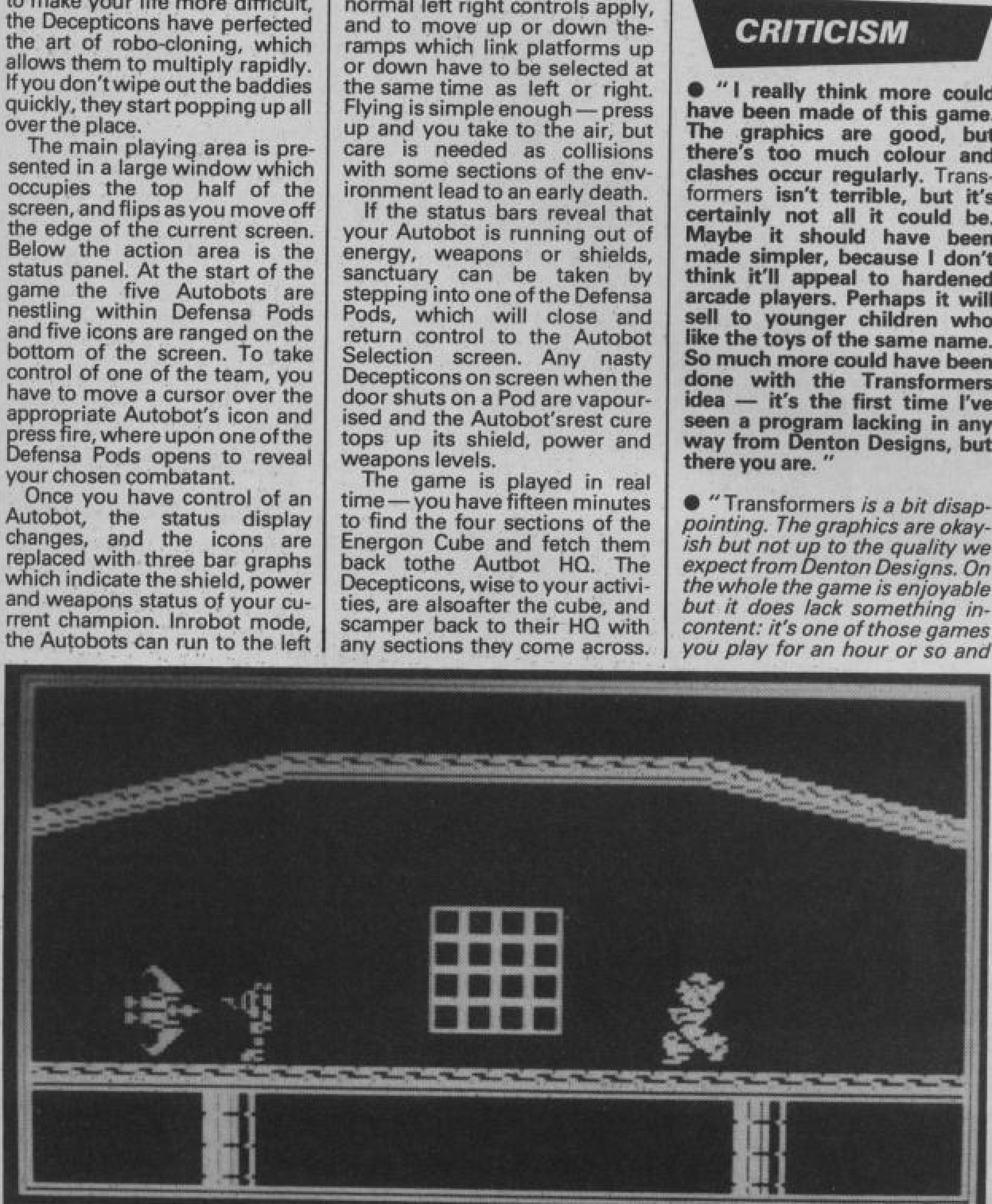
Once you have control of an Autobot, the status display changes, and the icons are replaced with three bar graphs which indicate the shield, power and weapons status of your current champion. Inrobot mode, the Autobots can run to the left and right and take to the air, flying along Superman style. To transform into vehicle mode turn the Autobot so it is facing out of the screen,press fire, and it crunches down into a nifty four wheel motor. An Autobot in vehicle mode can zoom along at a fair lick, but the penalty is that its laser system is disabled. Fortunately, the vehicles are low on the ground, so most of the laser bolts fired by the evil Decepticons pass above it.

The battle is waged in a huge city complex containing a weird mix of architectural constructions including walkways, ramps and strange pillars. In vehicle mode you can out-run the Decepticons, and make rapid progress along the catwalks and up and down ramps— but be careful not to zoom off the edge of a walkway into thinair as you can't transform when you are falling. In walking mode the normal left right controls apply, and to move up or down the ramps which link platforms up or down have to be selected at the same time as left or right. Flying is simple enough — press up and you take to the air, but care is needed as collisions with some sections of the environment lead to an early death.

If the status bars reveal that your Autobot is running out of energy, weapons or shields, sanctuary can be taken by stepping into one of the Defensa Pods, which will close and return control to the Autobot Selection screen. Any nasty Decepticons on screen when the door shuts on a Pod are vapourised and the Autobot'srest cure tops up its shield, power and weapons levels.

The game is played in real time — you have fifteen minutes to find the four sections of the Energon Cube and fetch them back tothe Autbot HQ. The Decepticons, wise to your activities, are alsoafter the cube, and scamper back to their HQ with any sections they come across. Which means you have to penetrate their base, and life becomes harder . . .

Success within the fifteen minutes on level one is all very well, but the battle continues, getting harder and harder as the bad guys get meaner and multiply faster.



CRITICISM

● "**I really think more could have been made of this game. The graphics are good, but there's too much colour and clashes occur regularly.** Transformers **isn't terrible, but it's certainly not all it could be. Maybe it should have been made simpler, because I don't think it'll appeal to hardened arcade players. Perhaps it will sell to younger children who like the toys of the same name. So much more could have been done with the Transformers idea — it's the first time I've seen a program lacking in any way from Denton Designs, but there you are.** "

● "Transformers *is a bit disappointing. The graphics are okayish but not up to the quality we expect from Denton Designs. On the whole the game is enjoyable but it does lack something incontent: it's one of those games you play for an hour or so and then put away to forget about. I can't really think of anything really constructive about this game — it's neither particularly good nor really bad. If you're a fan of the TV series it mayprove enjoyable, but I doubt it. This is an average game that may appeal to younger players.* "

● "Definitely one of Ocean's worst games, though it may appeal to a few people who like Transformers. I was left with a very bad impression: no nice tunes; no fast or smooth graphics; attribute problems galore; character space accuracy and terrible controls. If you leg it off the edge of a screen with a nasty in hot pursuit it doesn't follow you, which is a bit illogical. I found it very hard to get into and slow to react to the fast decisions that have to be made in order to defeat the Deceptrons. All in, the presentation of the game is way below Ocean's normal standard, and a real let down from the Denton Designs people. The only bit I really liked was the point (right at the end) when I pulled out the power lead. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1 left, 2 right, 3 down, 4 up, 5 fire
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Protek, Fuller, AGF
Keyboard play: awkward
Use of colour: plenty of it, but lots of clashes
Graphics: neatly done
Sound: none
Skill levels: one
Screens: 128
General rating: A bit of a disappointment, given the idea and the people who wrote the game

Use of computer	72%
Graphics	62%
Playability	68%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	59%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**60%**

PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT

Producer: Britannia Software Ltd
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Steve Gardener**

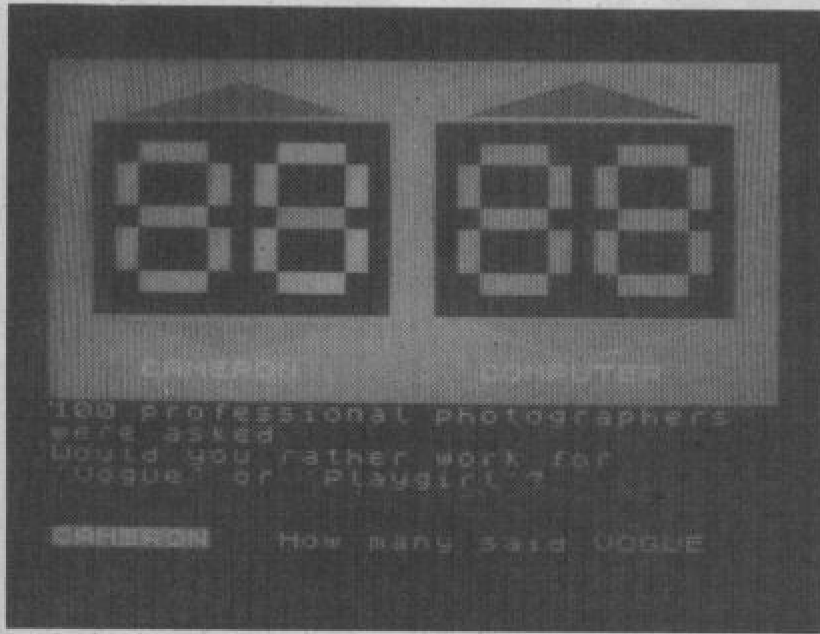
Britannia Software started out with a Spectrum version of the TV Quiz show **Blockbusters** — now they have expanded their TV tie-in activities with a version of Bruce Forsythe's *Play Your Cards Right*.

When the program has loaded you are greeted with a large picture of Brucie himself, leering out of the screen and inviting you to play the game, accompanied by the Spectrum's rendition of the theme tune to the TV show. Once you've chosen whether to play against the computer or a human opponent and have entered names appropriately, the display flips to the question screen. Two large digital displays occupy two thirds of the screen, with an area below used for text.



The digital displays, one for each player, emulate LED displays as found on calculators and consist of blocks which light up to form numbers. A question which was asked of a group of one hundred people is flashed onto the screen. One player has to guess how many people answered 'yes' to the question and enter the number into his display. The other player then has to decide whether the actual number of positive responses to the question was higher or lower and press H or L followed by ENTER.

If the player guessing whether the responses were higher or lower gets it right, then he wins and has first go on the next screen where both players are presented with a horizontal row of five cards. On the card screen, players guess whether the next card in their line will be higher or lower than its predecessor before it is turned face up. A player can change the current card once during his turn, and can freeze play at any point, carrying the cards that have been turned face up over to the next visit to the card screen.



Vogue or Playgirl eh? Which one would our photographer like to work for . . . PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT, Cameron!

The aim is to to get all five cards turned face up — if a player guesses the value of the next card in sequence incorrectly then all his cards except the first one are turned face over and replaced with new ones before control passes to the other person. If neither player manages to get all five cards face up on the card screen, the game returns to the question screen, another question is flashed onto the screen and the game continues as before with the players changing places.

If one of the players gets through the card screen then he gets a chance to gamble the points collected on the final screen, where bets can be laid on the turn of cards. The game ends when the winner runs out of points to gamble with or has turned all the cards face up.

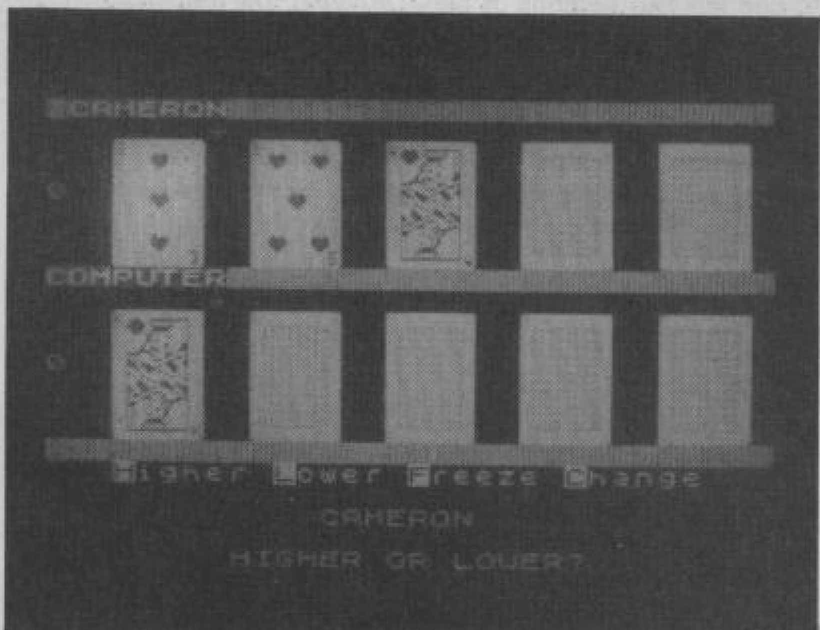
What do points make? Prizes. Well, not in the computer version of the game . . .

CRITICISM

● **" Not an enthralling game, I'm afraid. You've only got three screens to play on and the gameplay is hardly demanding. The programming seemed a bit shoddy too — if you don't watch very closely when you're playing the computer the response you are asked to go Higher or Lower on is overwritten. Not clever. The computer can be a bit dim when it's playing — I put in 00 on the question screen once, and the computer said the number of people who answered was lower! I suppose this game might be fun for a group of telly addicts or maiden aunties, but it's not for me. I don't care what Brucie says: Tonight's not going to be a good night if I play my cards right! "**

● *" Before playing this game, I thought it might add to the 'popular' TV series, but it's pretty much the same. A recognisable version of the TV show, with a reasonable theme tune and a neat characterisation of Brucie on the intro screen. Unfortunately, I'm not a fan of the programme. An aggravating aspect is that sometimes during calculations, the last prompt remains on screen, giving the impression that the computer hasn't accepted your input. Parts, I suspect, are in BASIC or were compiled into average code. I didn't really enjoy playing it alone, but the game is more fun in pairs or with two teams. (Even better with a studio audience . . .) "*

● " The TV series is one of my favourite programmes on telly at the moment, because of the great amount of audience participation, but a computer version couldn't really allow for this. Consequently, *Play Your Cards Right* didn't really turn out to be much of a success in my view. The question screen only displays the guesses and not the answers, which can be a bit confusing at first. The fact that you don't know what option the computer took on the one player game means it's difficult to go higher or lower! Some things were lacking — like the Brucie Bonus and big prizes. And I missed the Dolly Dealers! "

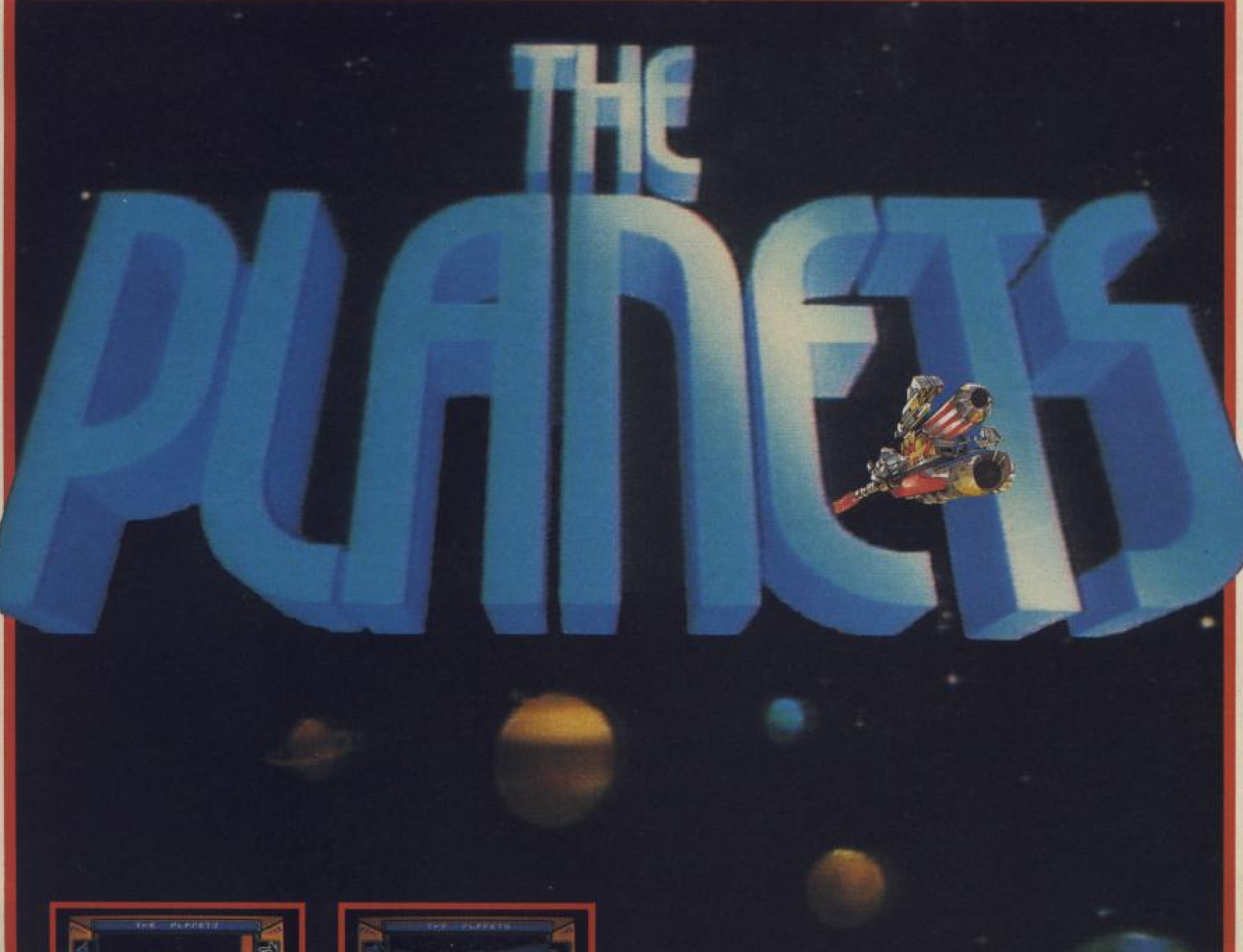


Ace CRASH photography person, Cameron, takes on the computer in PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT. He's not doing to badly, either, when it comes to guessing the turn of the card

COMMENTS

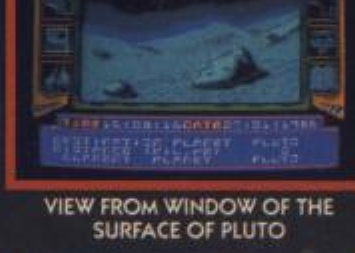
Control keys: H for higher, L for Lower, Number keys to enter your guess and gamble on the final screen, F to freeze play on the card screen, and C to change card
Joystick: N/A
Keyboard play: no problems
Use of colour: simplistic
Graphics: well detailed cards, little else
Sound: silence, apart from the theme tune at the start
Skill levels: one
Screens: 3
General rating: A bit yawn-inducing unless you're a real Brucie Groupie!

Use of computer	45%
Graphics	37%
Playability	43%
Getting started	41%
Addictive qualities	37%
Value for money	36%
Overall	**38%**

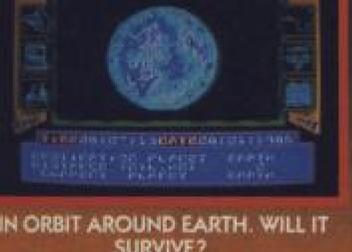




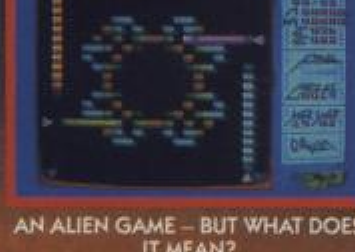
LONG RANGE MAP FOR DESTINATION SELECT.



VIEW FROM WINDOW OF THE SURFACE OF PLUTO



IN ORBIT AROUND EARTH. WILL IT SURVIVE?



AN ALIEN GAME – BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



The Year is 2007. Life on planet Earth is coming to an end. A series of monumental natural disasters has thrown the Earth's climate into a deadly spiral – a second Ice Age has already begun. The skies are black with volcanic dust. Massive earthquakes hamper the world's futile attempts to cope with the changing environment. All seems doomed. Into this darkening chaos an Alien life force makes its presence known. A metal capsule plummets unscathed through the atmosphere. It contains a map of the Solar System and shows the position of eight similar capsules, one for each of the Earth's planetary neighbours, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus and Pluto.

A radio signal is received from deep space. When decoded it is found to be a computer program. The program is loaded into a suitable microcomputer. A strange game unfolds which appears to obey certain complex rules – but there are no instructions or explanations. It is obviously of great significance, but what does it mean?

A spacecraft is prepared in a desperate bid to reach the eight remaining capsules. You are selected as its pilot. The hopes of the world go with you.

This outstanding program is much more than a game. Using stunning state of the art graphics and the latest programming techniques, the Solar System in all its power and mystery will unfold before your eyes. Heather Couper, President of the British Astronomical Association has been fully involved in its computerised creation to make sure that everything is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Even the results of Voyager 2's recent encounter with Uranus have been incorporated into the design of that cold and inhospitable world.

And yet it is a game, and a very challenging one at that. The Solar System, the strange alien game, the eight mysterious capsules are all interconnected. Together they hold the key to survival of life on Earth.

For those able to reach all eight capsules and make sense of all that they find – there are prizes to be claimed, but for all who attempt this exciting quest, the journey itself will prove more than worthwhile.

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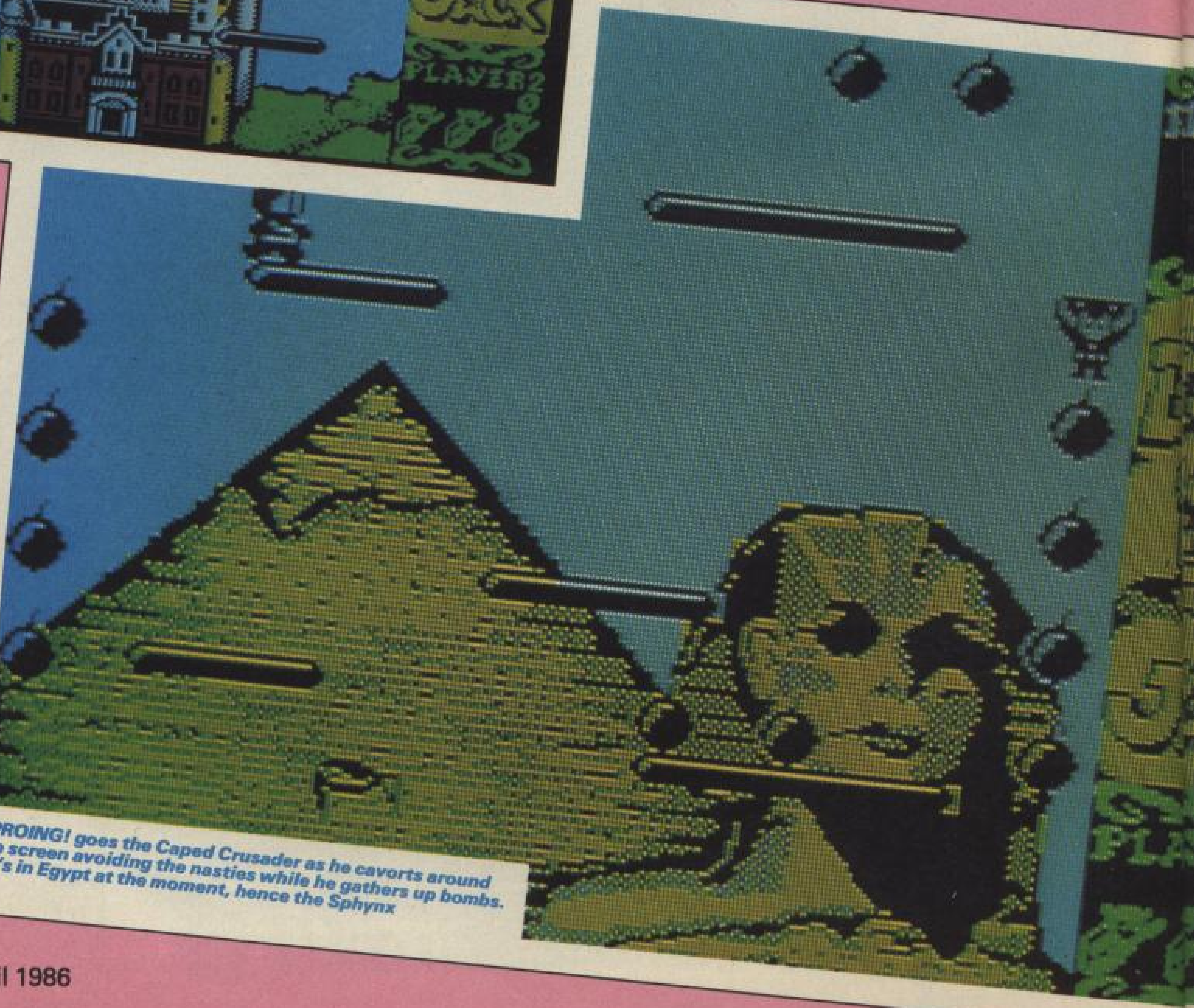


Leap cavort, collect, collect, avoid, collect. All in a day's work for BOMBJACK as he does the bizz with the bombs in Elite System's latest arcade conversion





Producer: Elite
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Andy Williams and Paul Holmes**



SPROING! goes the Caped Crusader as he cavorts around the screen avoiding the nasties while he gathers up bombs. He's in Egypt at the moment, hence the Sphynx

B·O·M·B·J·A·C·K

Bombjack is the Spectrum version of a respectably succesful Tehkan arcade game from a couple of years back.

Bombjack is a super powered hero who has dedicated his life to truth, freedom and defusing bombs. Unfortunately the inhabitants of his cosy world are far from benign, and their favourite occupation is hassling and harrassing Mr Jack. Their touch is deadly and contact with any of them snatches away one of the three lives he has during superheroing activities.

In his quest to dispose of bombs, our superhero is far from parochial, travelling around the world to continue his quest. There are five different locations, each containing a backdrop depicting a famous place. Each screen contains twenty four bombs, which are of the traditional 'bowling ball with a bit of string on it' kind. Whoever made these explosive devices was not exactly skillful, since they never ever explode, no matter how long the fuses fizzle.

Bomb disposal is Bombjack's hobby and the little chap sproings around the platforms on a screen gathering up the explosive devices. Your little caped crusader can leap into the air and move left and right — and there's a turbo leap option which sends Bombjack sproinging upwards in a real mega bound. Bombs are collected by travelling over them, and when the first bomb on a screen is in the bag a fuse bursts into life on another bomb. It doesn't really matter if you don't run straight off and get the active bomb, but if you do a bonus is put your way. Collect twenty three bombs in the active state and a whopping 50,000 point bonus is put your way. Once all the bombs on a screen have been collected, Bombjack materialises in the middle of the next screen.

Each screen consists of a pretty scene with the bombs and platforms overlaid. Your hero can't jump through the platforms but he can run along them. Bombjack is governed by all the correct and proper laws of gravity and if the miniscule chappy takes a bound into the air then he also has to fall down. Repeated bashings on the fire button cause him to drift down at a slower rate. If you're playing with a joystick, pushing up while sproinging skyward puts the little sprite into turbo jump mode and pulling down with the fire button held down curtails the super hero's sky flying activities. In keyboard mode you can choose to play with Turbo Jump activated or deactivated.

This is all fine and well but there are the nasties to terrorize the little chap. The first and most fundamental baddie to beware of is the screen-patrolling bird creature which roughly homes in on your position. Luckily it's a slow creature of little brain which is easily outwitted. Then there are the robotic creatures who enjoy a life cycle fed by kinetic energy. The longer you spend on a screen, the quicker the baddies arrive. Robot baddies appear in the top left hand corner of the scene, materialising in mid air with a bit of an explosion to drop onto the nearest platform. The Robo nasties trundle left and right along their landing platform for a while and then decide to walk off the edge of a ledge. When a robot hits the ground the kinetic energy built up during the fall transfers the metallic life form into an airborne creature that's all the more deadly. Other rolling ball thingies and vicious snails zoom around the screen trying to wipe your hero from the face of the game.

The nasties don't have it all their own way, however. Every so often a disk bearing the letter 'P' arrives in the playing area heralded by a continuous siren wail. Jumping through this power pill immobilises all the nasties on the screen and turns them into smiling faces. Points are awarded for leaping through a disabled nasty — which is conveneniently eliminated as you do so.

A magic button with the letter 'E' emblazoned on it adds another life to Bomjack's supply when collected, and a Bonus button 'B' adds points when collected and increases the value of subsequent bombs gathered up on that screen.



CRITICISM

"This is absolutely fantastic — it's so-o-o-o playable! All the features of the original arcade game have been crammed in, including the secret bonuses, aliens, different screen layouts — incredible. I found myself playing it for hours and hours, and even after a good long session, I kept sneaking back for another go. If you want a truly superlative arcade game which offers unbelievable addiction then got out and buy it now. If you miss it then you're missing something special."

CRITICISM

"Bombjack **is another great little game, packed full of addictivness and high-scores. Although it looks very simple to an onlooker you realize that it is full of that same mysterious element that kept everyone playing** Roller Coaster **well on into the night. The game contains all the features of the arcade version, but I felt it didn't play as well — although this doesn't detract from the game at all. Great fun can be had with the two player option which allows proper challenges to be set up. It's so simple but so addictive. At £7.95 it's a give away and should provide endless hours of enjoyment and frustration."**

CRITICISM

"Wow! Having seen snippets of the arcade game, I reckon that Bombjack **is pretty hot as a copy of the original. The one problem is that it really seems to be a bit easy for the first few screens; after a few rounds though, it starts to get pretty tough! The sound, graphics and colour are all great and the game's playable too. Everything is polished, and just about as it should be. Some of the backgrounds are really excellent, and a good bit of strategy is needed to get past the first few rounds with maximum points.** Bombjack **is one of the best arcade conversions I've seen on the Spectrum for a long time. Get it!"**

COMMENTS

Control keys: M right, N left, Q extra jumping ability, A increase rate of descent, X jump
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: jolly nice
Graphics: great
Sound: little more than spot effects
Skill levels: gets harder the further you go
Screens: five backdrops and lots of different bomb formations
General rating: A great arcade conversion, don't miss it

Use of computer	**91%**
Graphics	**92%**
Playability	**95%**
Getting started	**91%**
Addictive qualities	**94%**
Value for money	**92%**
Overall	**92%**

Reviews

THINK!

Producer: Ariolasoft
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **RamJam Corporation, Designed by Tigress Marketing**

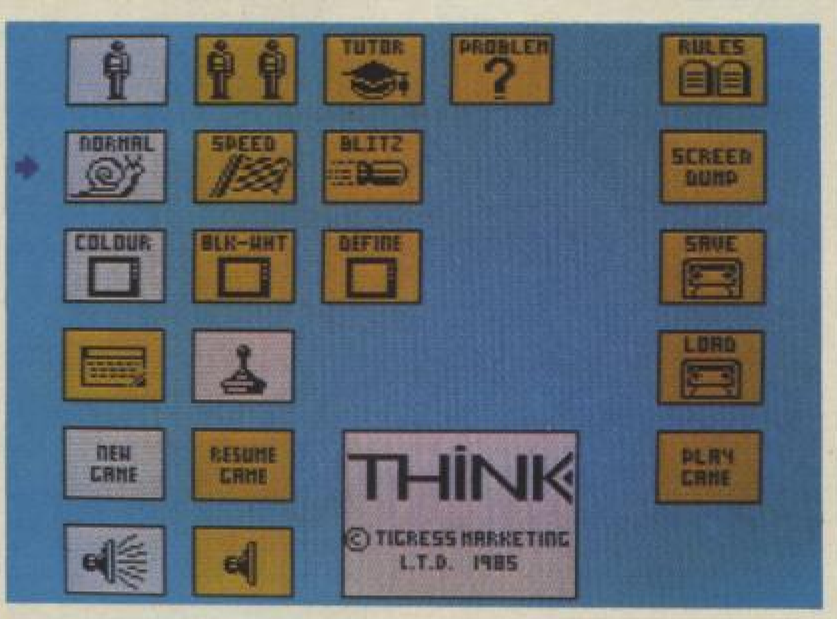
Ariolasoft have moved into the boardgame conversion market with *Think!* — a variant on the Connect 4 theme. The aim of the game, which can be played by two people or solo against the computer, is very straightforward. Players take turns to move a counter onto a six by six grid from the bottom or right-hand edge. If a player gets four counters in a vertical, horizontal or diagonal line then he wins the game, even if the line was produced by the player's opponent and didn't result from a masterly move on the part of the winner.

When a counter is pushed onto the board and enters a row or column which already contains pieces they are all nudged along one square to make room — if the row or column already contains six counters, the sixth counter 'falls off' the board.

move during each turn. If the best choice is made first time, then three points are awarded, two points are given for getting it right second time and one point is collected if the best move is made at the third attempt. At the end of a Tutorial Game the computer reports on the player's performance, giving a percentage rating. The Problem mode allows you to access one of the six inbuilt problems, which have to be solved in two moves, or devise problems of your own by setting up the board. Home-grown problems can be presented to the computer or a friend for solution.

If two players are settling down to a session of *Think!* they can opt to play a straight game, or can select SPEED *Think!*, when both players have to make each move within a time limit input at the start. Alternatively, BLITZ *Think!* can be played, in which each player has a time allocation in which all his moves during that game have to be made — if a player runs out of time then the game is lost.

The remaining game control icons on the main option screen allow sound to be toggled on and off, keyboard or joystick to be selected for input, and the colours of the counters used to be set. You can choose your own colours for the counters, accept



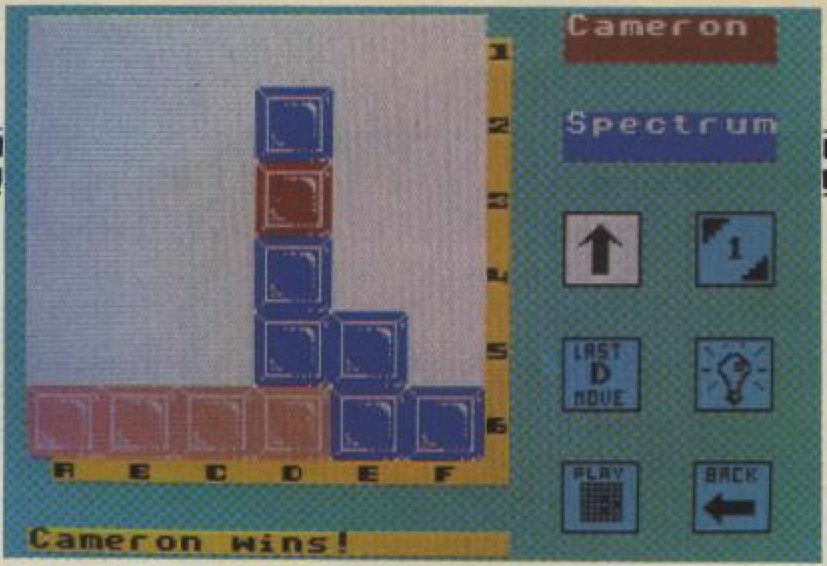
The impressive front-end icon screen which is used to set up the game of your choice before playing THINK!

The game can be controlled from the keyboard or with a joystick and all option selections except the player's turn are icon-driven. After loading, the main option screen is presented. Using the cursor and pressing fire or ENTER to select icons, the game is configured according to the player's wishes. One or two players can participate. One player can take the computer on in a normal game of *Think!*, or can choose between the Tutorial and Problem modes.

In the Tutorial game, the human player is allowed to make three attempts at the best

the default colours or specify black and white if your TV isn't up to full colour display.

If the player(s) are in any doubt about the rules, selecting the Rules Icon provides a quick summary of the salient points and accesses a demonstration sequence which plays a few moves on-screen. Once the options have been configured and the players are ready to do battle, selecting the Play Game icon moves the action to the playing area after a few appropriate questions about time limits and player names have been answered.



Cameron, our photography person, makes another bid for fame. He's just got four counters in a row and beaten the computer. Must have been THINKing hard!

The main screen contains the board itself and a panel of six icons, which give access to the following functions: return to the option screen; display the last move played; force the computer to play the next move; change the computer's skill level; ask the computer to suggest a move and go back over the last two moves.

During play, a bar on the bottom of the screen displays the name of the current player, who must press the appropriate number or letter key to select the entry point for his counter. At the end of a game, all the moves can be reviewed by selecting the BACK icon, and choosing a replay speed from 1 to 9. At any point during a game it is possible to flip to the option screen and save the game to tape or dump the screen to a ZX printer. The game in progress can be resumed, or abandoned and a new game started with the same set-up.

There's certainly plenty of scope for *Think*ing!

CRITICISM

● **" Icons are the latest trend, and Ariolasoft's icon-driven menu is a pleasure to use. It's good to have a nice simple but playable board/strategy game, and this is both original and challenging. As the instructions say, it's easy to pick up, but difficult to master. Essentially, we have a good simple idea, that has been well implemented. Levels One and Two didn't present toooo much of a challenge when I was playing the computer, but as I progressed beyond Level Three I had to give the old brain a good dust down as it got really hard. I suppose lots of people are going to master it, but it gave me a bit of fun for the time I played it, and one thing's for sure: it made me THINK! "**

● *" On receiving this game the first thing I did was think! What on earth could a game called* Think *be about? On playing the game is became very obvious — what a thinker stinker it is!* Think *is an excellent variation of the old board game Connect 4 which I love. This is a very polished icon-driven game, and it's very addictive indeed — why can't all games be this well presented? After the shock of the great 'front end' I finally got to the game itself, which gave me a few sleepless hours.* Think *is a definite test of the old brain cells at the beginning, but after a while I found it quite easy to win on even the harder levels. A small let down: I enjoyed the challenge. Then I realised that if I was careless with my first few moves, the old challenge soon returned. I'd recommend this game to all shoot em up addicts — it'll certainly keep them quiet for a bit. "*

● " Although you might think this game is very complicated and difficult to get into from the reams of instructions on the inlay, it's really very simple indeed. After a few moments getting the hang of the icons, you're away. The game itself is frustratingly complex — although the moves and rules are really simple. I found it very addictive and lots of fun — and good exercise for the grey matter. Well worth getting hold of a copy . . . "

COMMENTS

Control keys: SPACE to move cursor down, M cursor up, Enter to highlight icon selected
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: fine
Use of colour: definable colours for counters, well thought out
Graphics: serve their purpose well
Sound: just beeps to confirm selections
Skill levels: seven levels for your computer opponent
Screens: option screen and playing area
General rating: A very well thought out brain teaser

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	80%
Playability	85%
Getting started	83%
Addictive qualities	86%
Value for money	78%
Overall	**82%**

COSTA CAPERS

Producer: Firebird
Retail price: **£9.95**
Author: **Steve Marsden and Dave Cook**

The strange saga of Ted Blewitt continues on from Hewson's *Technician Ted* in Firebird's *Costa Capers*.

With all the hard work that poor little prole Ted had to go through at the Chip Factory he's decided that it's time for a rest. Just like every other Trevor, Russell and Sharon, Ted plumps for a good time in sunny Spain on a package holiday. He's packed all the items he needs for a really good time in the sun. Unluckily though, some nasty person has used five fingered discount to 'buy' all of Ted's luggage, including his camera. Gosh, the chaps at work would never believe that Ted had been off to Spain without a set of snaps to prove it. There's no way he's going to get to Spain anyway, without his passport and luggage.

The main problem about retrieving his lost property is that Ted finds himself in a very strange environment indeed. The inhabitants of the area are most peculiar types. Quite a few of the usually passive items of Ted's luggage have burst into dangerous animation, to make things worse. Ted has to retrieve his luggage, take 36 snapshots of the Iberian countryside and then get back home in time to start work again at the Chip Factory with all three dozen holiday pics duly developed.

Ted is jolly little character, looking exactly the same as he did in his last incarnation and he can move left and right and sproing into the air. The background Ted leaps about on is organised into screens and if Ted goes of the edge of a screen another flips into view. A status area underneath the main display section helps you keep track of the variables that playing *Costa Capers* requires you to juggle with. Four histograms represent Ted's intoxication level, hangover strength, degree of sunburn and energy level.

There's an awful lot of drink hanging around the place, and getting drunk is not as pointless and stupid as it is in real life: in *Costa Capers* having a quick razzle with a can of lager can actually be a bit of a benefit, providing the extra 'Dutch Courage' to get past a few of the normally impassable meanies.

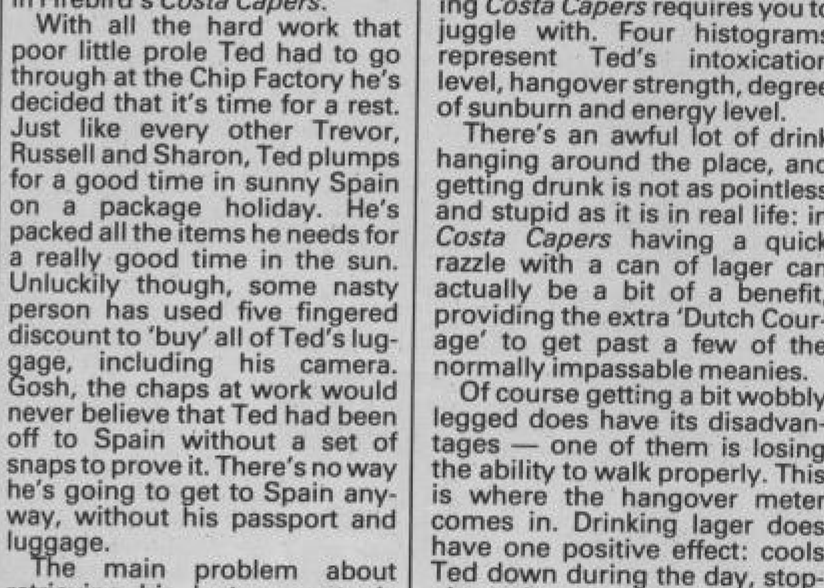
Of course getting a bit wobbly legged does have its disadvantages — one of them is losing the ability to walk properly. This is where the hangover meter comes in. Drinking lager does have one positive effect: cools Ted down during the day, stopping the sunburn—o—meter from rising too high. Collecting a parasol keeps the sun off his back. If you allow Ted to get too drunk, too sunburnt or give him too great a hangover, his performance suffers.

To complete *Costa Capers* you need to collect objects to enable you to collect other objects, that enable you to collect others . . . and so on ad inifinitum, well almost. A money meter shows how much loot Ted has collected and he needs money to buy back some of his property. Collecting certain artefacts can cause problems, as removing an item may have a strange effect in another place, 'due to some shift in the fabric of time in some other dimension'.

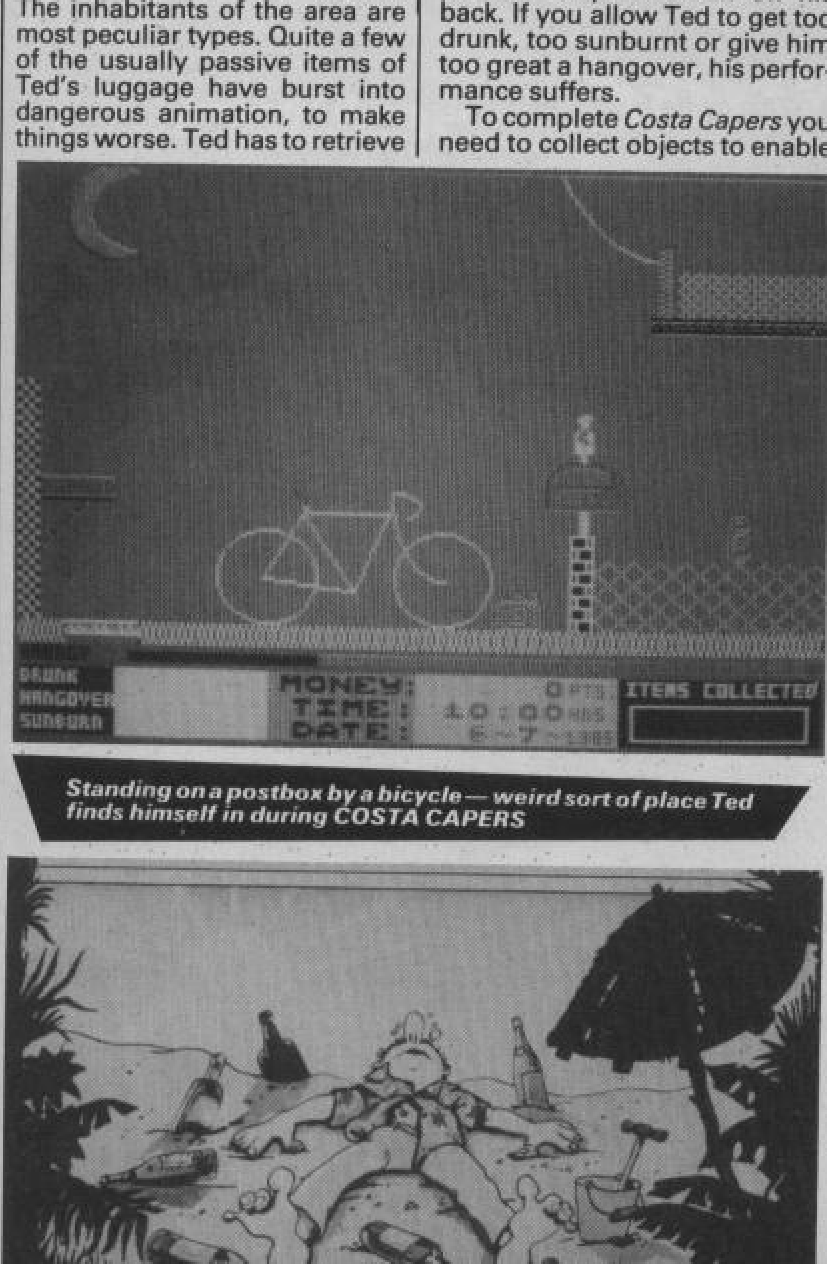
Up to eight objects can be carried at a time, and they are displayed in a scrolling window in the status area. If you drop an object in the path of a mobile nasty, it is lost for ever as the sprite steals it and refuses to hand it back until you start a new game. Time passes rapidly, and the game has to be completed so Ted can be back at work when the holiday fortnight ends. Rather than lose lives as a result of collisions with mobiles, Ted loses time — each mini-death costs him an hour.



Ted starts off from his Home Sweet Home on a quest that might bring him a set of holiday snaps to show round the canteen - or a severe hangover



Standing on a postbox by a bicycle — weird sort of place Ted finds himself in during COSTA CAPERS



CRITICISM

●" **As platform games go,** Costa Capers **really is quite reasonable, though a little bit too difficult. It's also a bit too derivative as well — it's very nearly** Technician Ted. **It's a shame about the graphics since, unlike TT when it came out, they really do look a bit ancient. Still very impressive though, is the smoothness of all the characters jetting about the screen. Even though I like platform games I still found** Costa Capers **just a bit too hard to be enjoyable. Real pros may think differently.** "

●" *I was expecting a real advance on* Technician Ted *with this one, and boy, was I wrong! If anything, it's a step backwards. The graphics are neat, and it's quite a good game, but there is so much potential unrealised, that it's a real disappointment. At the time, TT was the joint second highest game ever rated in CRASH, but I can't see* Costa Capers *repeating that feat. Some of the problems are quite difficult, but this serves to be frustrating rather than adding to the game. For the high price asked, I can't madly recommend* Costa Capers, *except to those who were mega-fans of the original.* "

●" I certainly wasn't expecting another *Technician Ted* when I loaded this game up, but that's what I got. This sort of game is fairly dated now, so why on earth have Firebird included *Costa Capers* in their new Hot Range? The graphics are about average for this type of game: your character is very small but adequately animated and the other characters are large and usually well detailed. The sound is fair but nothing to write home about. There are many nice touches included in this one, but they weren't enough to keep me playing. This game is so like many others and contains nothing I haven't seen before somewhere else. If you were mad keen on *Technician Ted* perhaps it will appeal to you, but there are loads of good arcade/adventures around for much less than *Costa Capers.* "

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q left, W right, Z—M jump, S—G drop item, H—L pick up item, A pause, ENTER to start/toggle tune
Joystick: Kempston Cursor Interface 2
Keyboard play: no problems
Use of colour: quite pretty
Graphics: some interesting nasties
Sound: smashing tune at the start, otherwise usual effects
Skill levels: one
Screens:
General rating: A must for *Technician Ted* fans, otherwise check it out first

Use of computer	77%
Graphics	69%
Playability	67%
Getting started	69%
Addictive qualities	72%
Value for money	59%
Overall	**64%**

HYPA RAID

Producer: **Atlantis**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Author: **Nigel Edwards**

Well it's far into the future and the Americans and Russians are still going at it hammer and sickle. Now the Soviets have developed a new MIG Starfighter, a highly dangerous and sophisticated weapon currently being constructed in a secret factory deep within the Siberian wastes. For extra security the plane has been split into different modules and scattered throughout different workshops. With the MIG spread over such a large security complex it's going to take a real American super hero to infiltrate the factory and steal the parts of the plane. Or someone really stupid.

The security system within the factory is mainly based around a colour coded card/lock system. At any one time a data card and a lock card can be carried. Holding a lock key that matches the colour of a door grants you access to the region behind it. In the higher security sections an appropriately coloured data card is also needed to open coloured doors.

Cyborg guards patrol areas of the factory complex, blindly following their pre-ordained paths. Contact with a guard causes one of the four micro batteries running your protective suit to lose a third of its power and you return to the start of the current screen. If all four batteries are out of action, the environment stabilisers in your suit pack up and you expire.

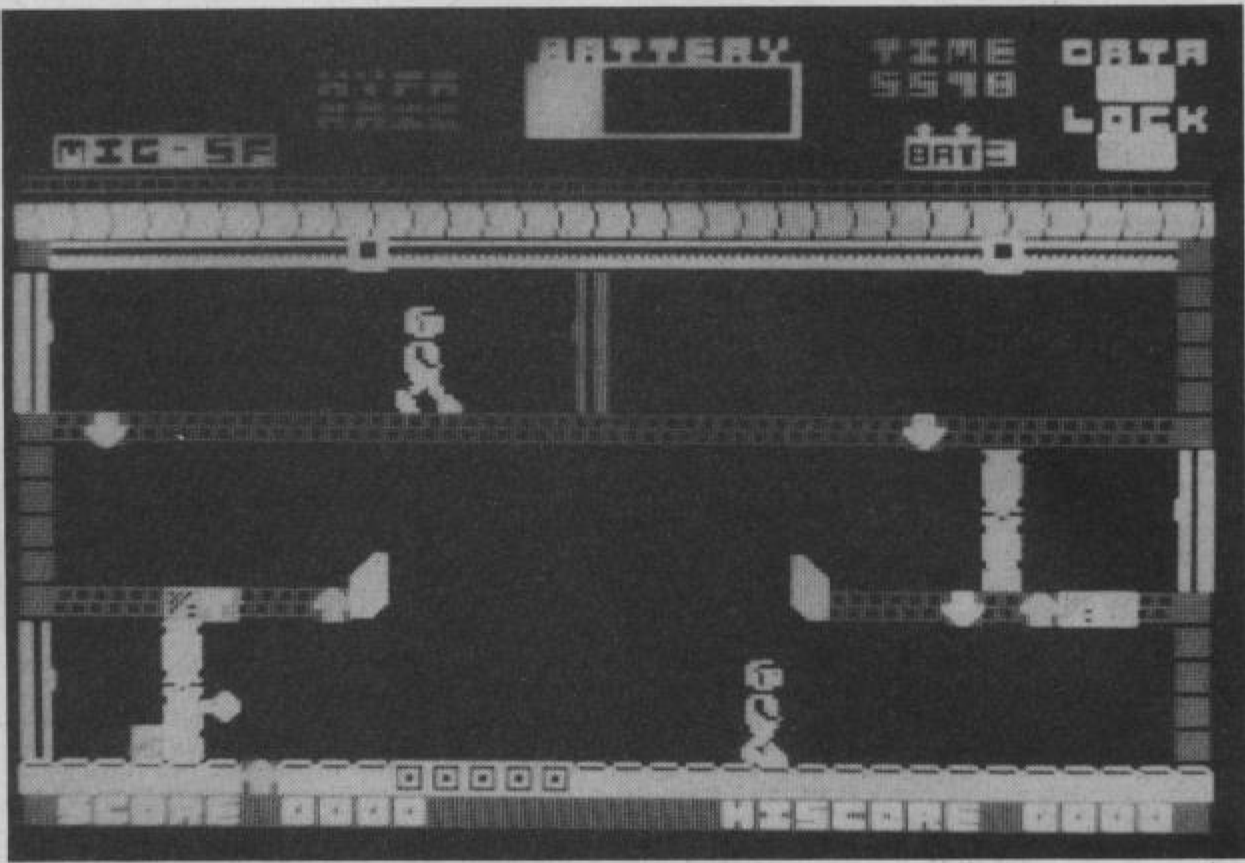
The factory itself is made from a series of rooms each with a number of gantries and walkways making up the scenery. There aren't any ladders connecting the thoroughfares but one way transporter beams serve a similar purpose. These appear in the form of arrows in the platform floors. Whichever way the arrow points is the way you're transported if you stand over it and press the activate button. The transportation is immediate but it's worth waiting before transporting for any cyborgs that may be trotting over the landing pad to get out of the way.

Stealthy super secret agent that you are, your actions include walking left and right along gangways and activating objects — you don't have a gun, so cunning rather than violence is called for.

Most factory chambers contain a couple of main doors that connect with other parts of the complex. Travel through one of these portals and another chamber flicks into view. The all important sections of the MIG fighter are shown as flashing squares. Guide your guy over one of these and a small detail of the overall MIG SF is added to a growing picture in the status area at the top of the screen.

Different pieces of lock and data card are also imbedded in the floors. Standing over one of these floor plates and pressing the activate button causes an exact electronic image to be copied into your data or lock store, wiping out the current image stored there. Sadly, you can't just wander about the factory opening all the doors and then running off to collect all the parts of the Starfighter since the doors reset and relock themselves when a room is re-entered.

Some circuitous routing is involved in completing the task, and you often have to retrace your steps in a chamber once a door has been opened, so that you can re-copy an appropriate lock or data pattern into your status area before proceeding.

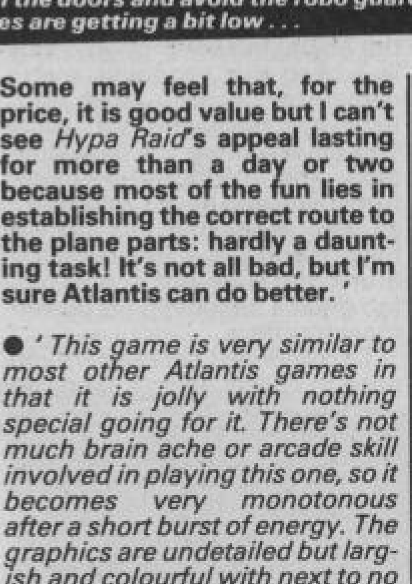


You're the guy striding out purposefully along the catwalk trying to open the doors and avoid the robo guards in HYPA RAID. Batteries are getting a bit low . . .

CRITICISM

● **'A lot of my dubiousness about cheapies has been dissipated by such games as *Booty*, *Finders Keepers* and the more recent and excellent *Spellbound*. But I don't feel this game is in quite the same class as some of the budget games around. It's like a cross between *Booty* (the door opening strategy) and *Frank 'n Stein* (activating things to rise a level) — a combination which hasn't quite come off. The continuous tune is average, as are the graphics. Some may feel that, for the price, it is good value but I can't see *Hypa Raid*'s appeal lasting for more than a day or two because most of the fun lies in establishing the correct route to the plane parts: hardly a daunting task! It's not all bad, but I'm sure Atlantis can do better.'**

● *'This game is very similar to most other Atlantis games in that it is jolly with nothing special going for it. There's not much brain ache or arcade skill involved in playing this one, so it becomes very monotonous after a short burst of energy. The graphics are undetailed but largish and colourful with next to no colour clash. The sound is poor, with an appalling tune that you can't disable and very few spot effects. Generally* Hypa Raid *is a little monotonous, so I wouldn't really recommend it but on the other hand for two quid you can't go far wrong.'*



●' *Hypa Raid* is a strange type of game whose nearest relation seems to be Firebird's *Booty*. The game revolves around the player's ability to solve logic puzzles, even though at first sight it may seem like an arcade game. Most of the game involves trying the work out a feasible way of reaching the next door or lock pass. All very fine and well, but once a route has been worked out that's it, you still have to go through whatever sheets you've managed to solve previously. Maybe a function for saving out your game place would be handy. I can't say that *Hypa Raid* is the best budget game that I've seen, but it still may be worth having a look at if this sort of thing does appeal to you.'

COMMENTS

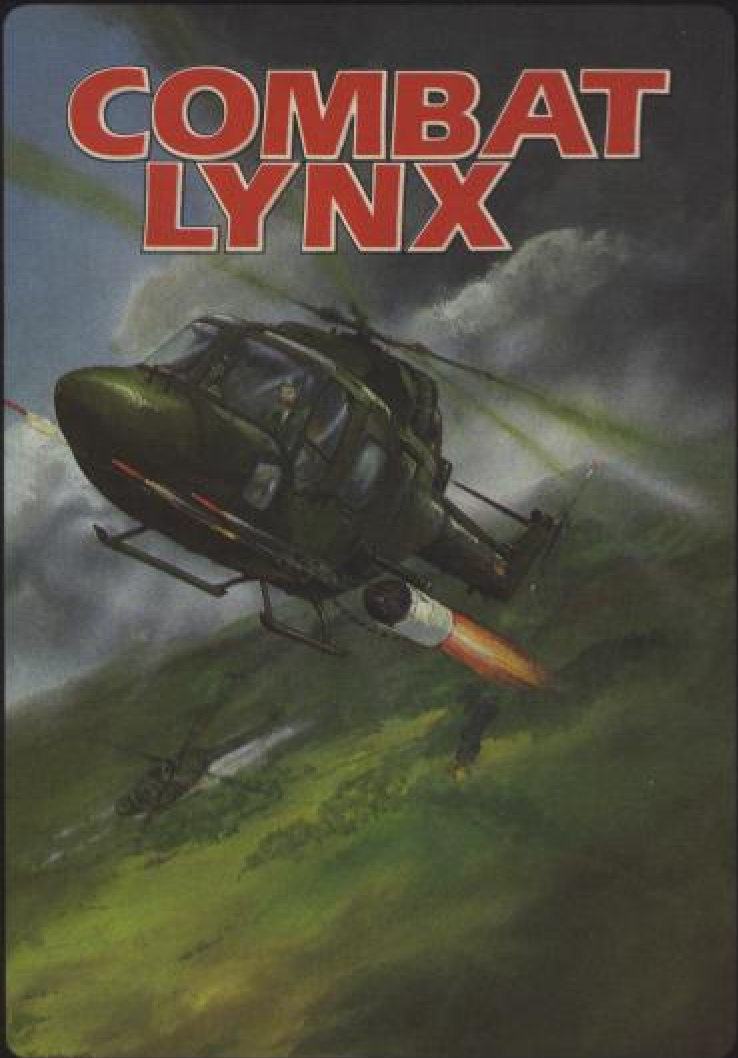
Control keys: Q left, W right, P activate
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: very simple and no problems
Use of colour: pretty enough
Graphics: adequate
Sound: nice start tune, annoying sounds during play
Skill levels: one
General rating: will appeal more to fans of logic puzzles than long term arcade addicts.

Use of computer	61%
Graphics	57%
Playability	62%
Getting started	63%
Addictive qualities	59%
Value for money	68%
Overall	**60%**



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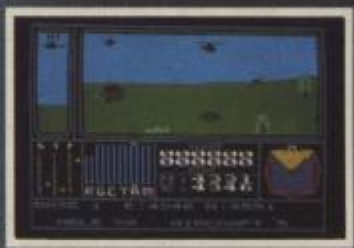
DURELL



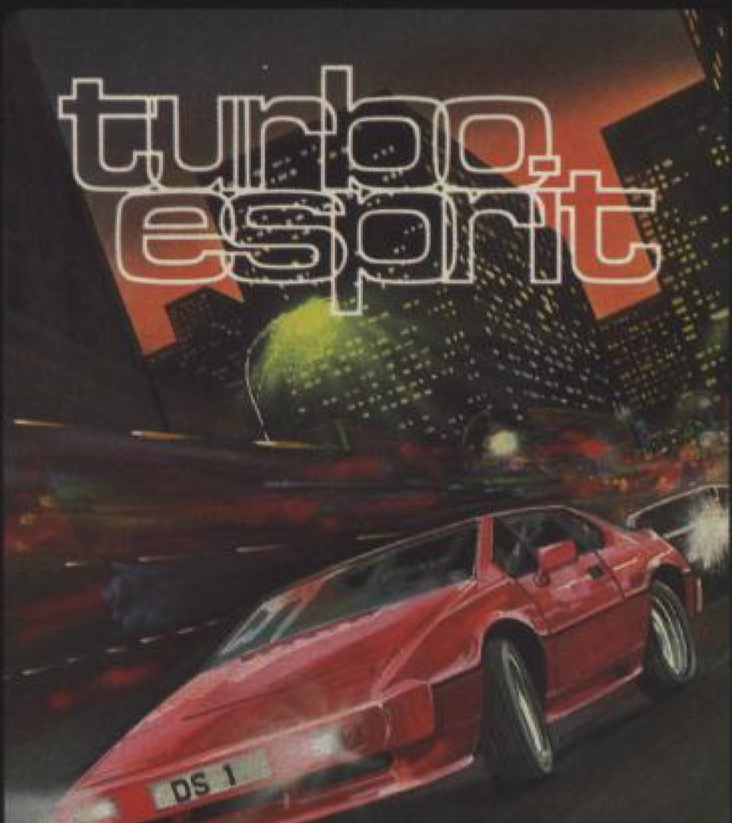
COMBAT LYNX (Air-to-ground Battle Simulation)

Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95
BBC/Electron	£8.95

"Combat Lynx is both simulation and shoot-em-up games in one. The 3D effect created by using contour line graphics tends to give it a more technical feel, so more like a simulation, but on the other hand there are lots of jets and enemy helicopters whizzing around and ground forces shooting at you which gives the game its instant playability appeal. Once you get the hang of coping with everything, it's possible to play a game of high strategy which involves not only arcade skills but those of forward planning. For people who enjoy strategy type games, Combat Lynx should provide hours of fun, while for those who prefer something instant and fast - choose skill level 4 and hang onto your hats! Generally the graphics are most impressive, with a few attribute problems when objects are about to become hidden, but these are minor in what is otherwise an engaging and challenging game."







TURBO ESPRIT (3D Simulation Car Chase)

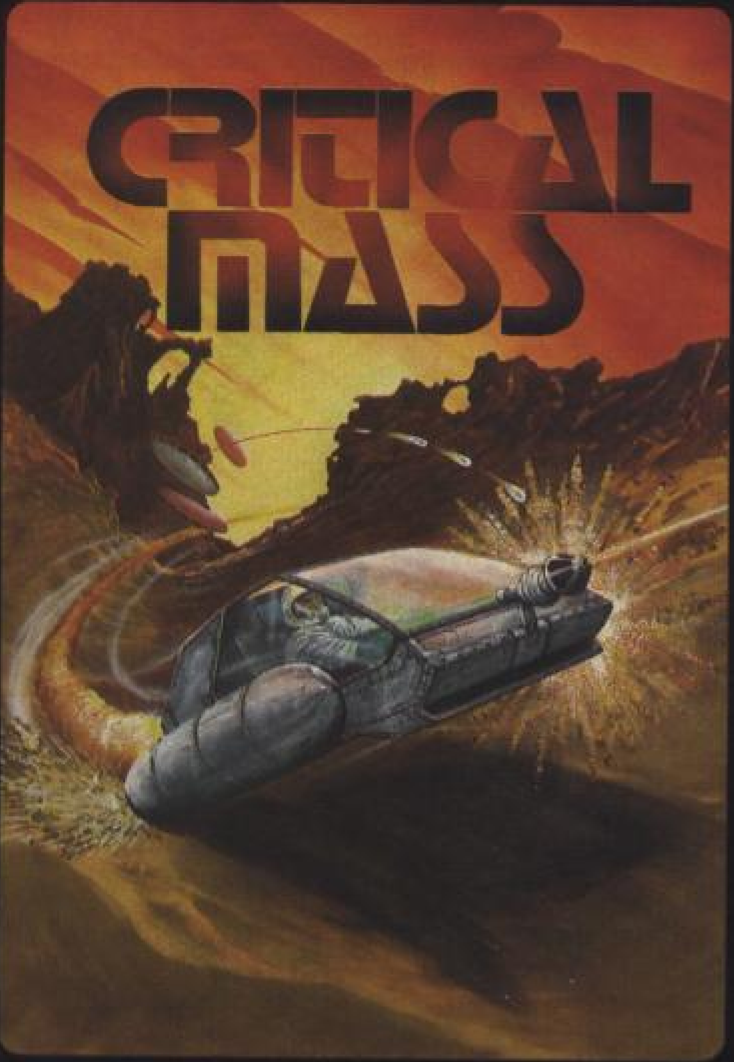
Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95

You are a special agent equipped with a Lotus Turbo Esprit. An international ring of drug smugglers are about to make a huge delivery of heroin, and must be stopped at all costs. The drugs are stored at a number of houses in the city, and will be taken by cars to an armoured van which will be cruising around the centre. A raid on the van before completion of the delivery would leave some of the drugs in circulation. Similarly a raid on any of the houses would alert them to your squad's activities. You must therefore try and pick-off the cars one by one before they make their drop, and then try to stop the van before it escapes. The delivery cars will be backed-up by 'hit' squads - so watch out!

(Developed with the support of Lotus Cars Ltd)







CRITICAL MASS (Arcade)

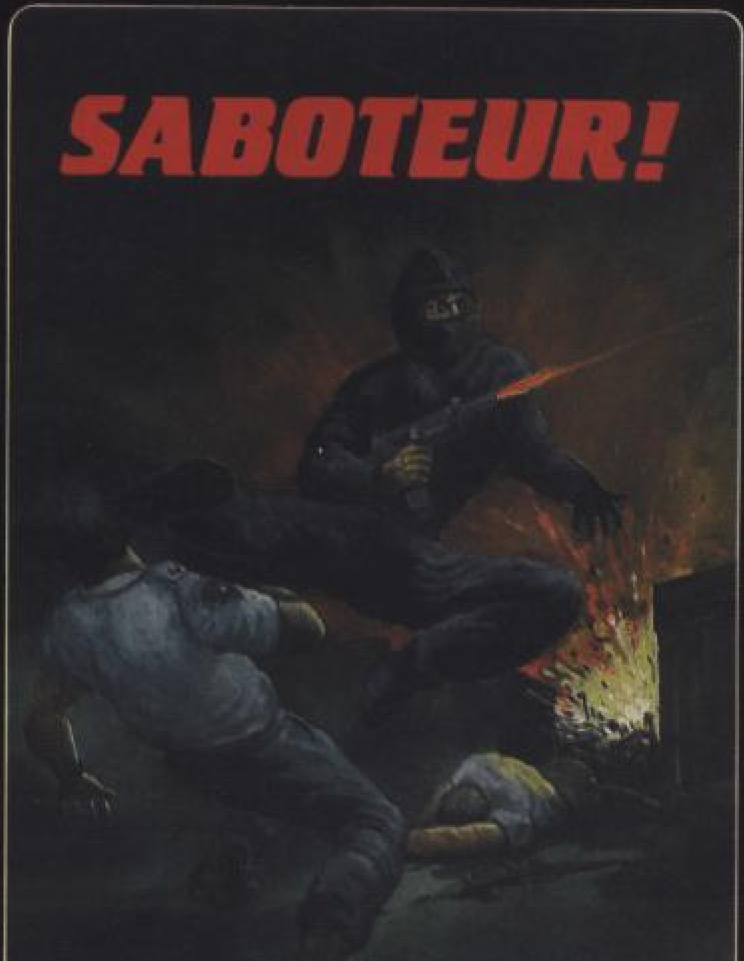
Spectrum 48k £8.95
Commodore 64 £8.95
Amstrad 464/6128 £8.95

An outlying system of the Terra Federation has set up an advanced anti-matter conversion plant on a centrally positioned asteroid to supply the local colonists with energy. A surprise attack by alien forces has successfully overcome the asteroid's defences and the aliens are now threatening to self-destruct the power plant unless the colonists offer an unconditional surrender. The self-destruction process would effectively turn the power plant into a massive black hole that would wipe out the entire planetary system along with a number of nearby stars. Unconditional surrender offers an equally horrific prospect. Your mission is to infiltrate the enemy position and disable the anti-matter plant before the aliens achieve CRITICAL MASS.

"This is the biz!......The graphics and playability of this game are superb, making it well worth the money."







SABOTEUR (Martial Arts Arcade Adventure)

Spectrum 48k £8.95
Amstrad 464/6128 £8.95
Commodore 64 £8.95

You are a highly skilled mercenary trained in the martial arts. You are employed to infiltrate a central security building which is disguised as a warehouse. You must steal a disk that contains the names of all the rebel leaders before its information is sent to the outlying security stations. You are working against the clock, both in getting to the disk, and in making your escape. You must enter the building from the sea by rubber dinghy, and will then only be able to leave by the helicopter on the roof. You will have to find your way around the warehouse, making use of the guards' own weapon supplies in your struggle through overwhelming odds.

"Saboteur is without a doubt one of the best arcade games I've seen for a long time and a welcome departure from the plethora of licenced/endorsed product that the industry seems to currently favour. Recommended."

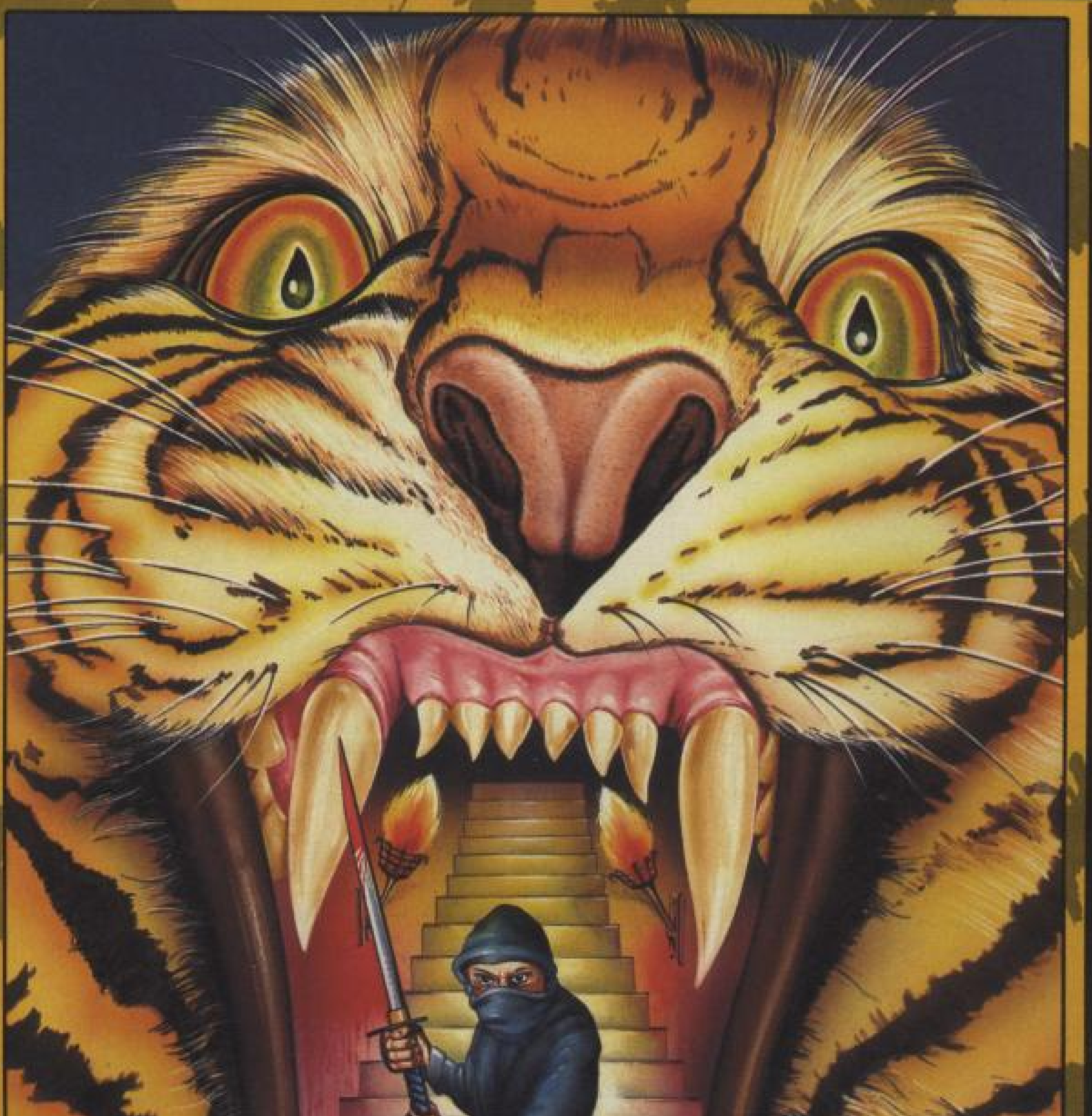




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software getting harder....

THE WAY OF THE TIGER



SKYFOX

Producer: **Ariolasoft**
Retail price: **£8.95**
Author: **Ray Tobey**

S*kyfox* is the latest jet plane, capable of 3,000 mph whilst carrying a full pay load of weapons and you, the player, are put into the cockpit of this awesome fighting machine. It's a very fast full-blown 3D game — a sort of flight simulator without all the twiddly complicated bits.

Your task is made plain — defend your colony from the forces of invading aliens. The colony forms the combat area and is represented as a 25x25 grid, each section of grid forming a sector.

The invading force consists of some conventional Earth-type battleforces — tanks and planes and a number of fat motherships which drop the enemy. All the action takes place on the grid, and if you happen to fly off it then a message is printed up telling you that the plane is 'off colony'.

The title screen contains a series of options — five difficulty levels and fifteen different scenarios (including practice modes). They're all basically the same, the only difference being the type of attack patterns and the number of tanks, planes and motherships which take part in the invasion.

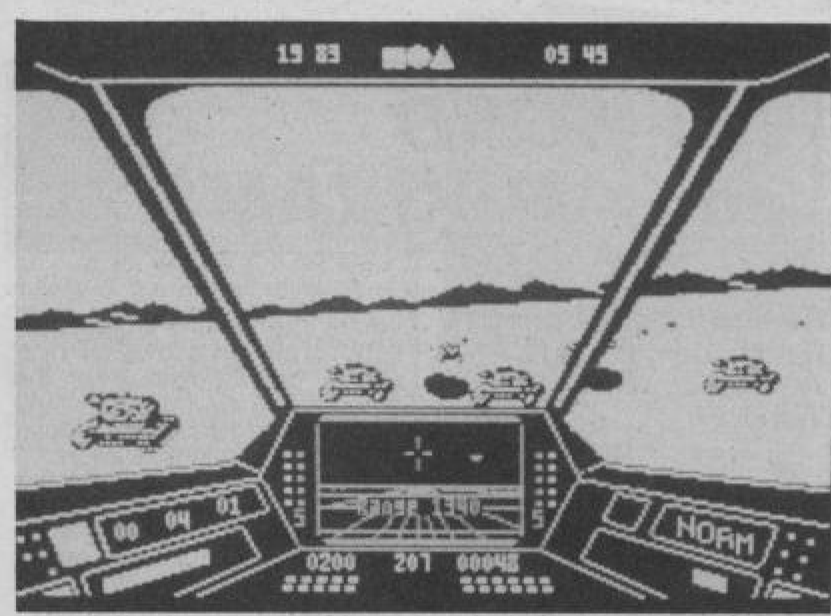
Starting in the colony base the player is given three lives and can select whether to start at high or low level (high level is at 30,000 feet up amongst the invading aircraft, and low level pits you against the marauding tank forces).

Skyfox is an advanced kind of machine, boasting comprehensive armament. The gunnery consists of a conventional laser which has unlimited firepower and is the weapon most used. Mounted under the wings are five heat seeking and five guided missiles. Each has to be primed before firing. When firing the guided missiles a little scanner appears showing the selected target and this is used to guide the missile home.

As you can imagine the enemy don't take your aggressive pursuits lying down and constantly fire at you when and where they can. Luckily *Skyfox* has a shielding system that allows a high number of shots to be fired into it before it fails and leaves you plunging out of the sky. Fuel is constantly eaten up by flying, forcing a return to the colony base to refuel and rearm. There are two bargraphs on the side of the screen showing the current state of fuel and shields so you've got no excuse if you crash (unless the colony base has been destroyed). Other displays include a constantly up dated radar map of the locality showing any alien forces nearby, the sector number you're in, a clock showing elapsed time since launch and the number of missiles left.

During the game you can call up the base computer (as long as it survives). This informs you of your current score, how many colonists have been bumped off by the alien attackers, the number of alien craft that have been destroyed and shield status for each colony installation. You can also cast a beady eye over a complete map of the colony which shows where the aliens are currently concentrating.

The final special feature is the autopilot. This saves time and energy — just press it when there are no aliens around and the autopilot flies you to the nearest aliens. If all the enemies have been eliminated then it whizzes you back home — nice.



The view through your Skyfox windshield reveals enemy tanks and aircraft, manoeuvring in realistic 3D.

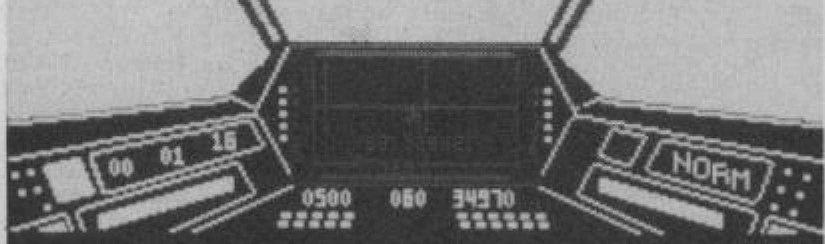


CRITICISM

● **'Yet an other flight simulation hits the market, and sets out to be a good one. I didn't think *Skyfox* was going to appear on the Spectrum because of the delay since its Commodore release, but wait has been well worth it. The graphics are excellent but can be a little bit fussy. The colour is a bit plain, though acceptable, not much is used, but who needs more with a great game? More sound would make it a bit better and exciting. Overall this game is certainly great and will be in the charts for a long time yet.'**

● *'*Skyfox *looks set for a long ride as the high-flying flight game. The graphics do jerk somewhat, but the general quality is very good. There's not much sound, but who needs it in a flight simulator? As as to the fifteen scenarios, what can I say? There was a lot of pre-release hype for this, and it seems to live up to the claims made for it. It's going to take a long time to become Ace of the Base, as it means mastering some of the more strategic invasions and becoming triumphant against a massive onslaught. For sure, Ray Tobey is going to be held responsible for a lot of missed sleep and meals!'*

● 'There is a lot more to *Skyfox* than first meets the eye — it's a very good mixture between an average shoot em up and an average flight simulator. The result is the best sort of com promise for those who think they hate flight simulators. It's not too hard to play if you're used to simulators, but the large shoot em up element adds to the strategy element — not unlike *Codename Mat*, ie lots of enemies closing in and you have to jump around the area deciding if to wipe em out or not. *Skyfox* features a good range of difficulty, which means you can start practically straight away and feel that you have done a good job in protecting Earth from invasion. A bad point is the way the screen seems to lock up when it's busy and the sound is buzzing, which makes fast play impossible. I think most people would be happy with this in their collection as the first flight simulator, but anyone who's got a few flight sims should be happy with what they've already got.



COMMENTS

Control keys: I/M up/down; J/K left/right (or cursors); plus other function keys
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair
Keyboard play: close 'cross keys' are subject to argument, and the game plays better with joystick
Use of colour: sparse, but avoids clashes
Graphics: great 3D and neat drawing
Sound: a few effects
Skill levels: 5
Screens: 15 scenarios
General rating: a pretty hot action flight simulator.

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	87%
Playability	81%
Getting started	86%
Addictive qualities	84%
Value for money	80%
Overall	84%

XO-WORD and ANAGRAMS

Producer: Azed Software
Retail price: **£5.95**
Author: **Joe Sherwood Taylor**

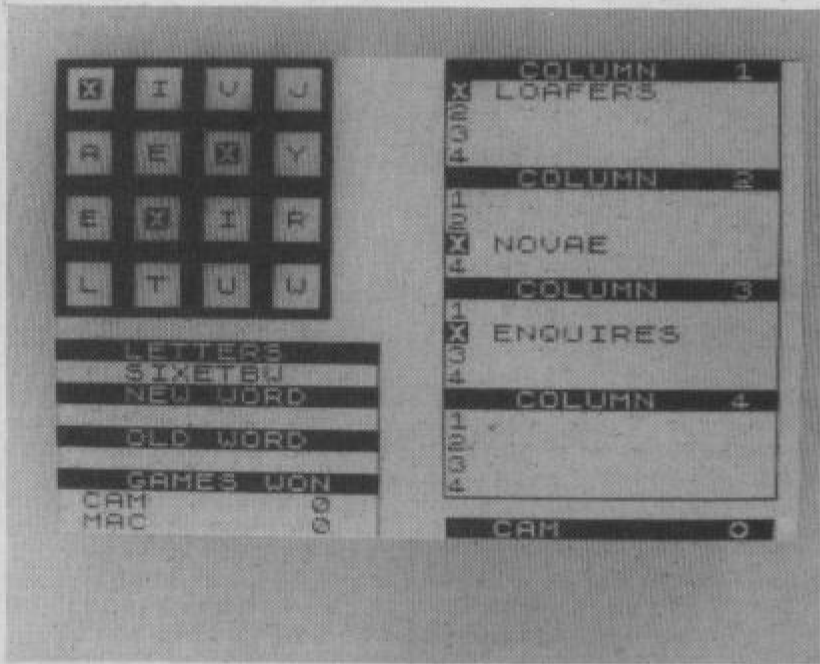
Azed software has compacted a twenty thousand word diction ary (not Lloyd's!) so that it will fit into the Spectrum's memory and still leave some room for a program to access it. The company has produced three tapes based on their lexicon, each containing two games. *Xo-Word* and *Anagrams* is the first to reach CRASH Towers.

As its name implies, *Anagrams* delivers lists of words from the characters you give it to work on, displaying them on screen. Individual words, names or phrases consisting of between four and twenty characters can be input and the program can be configured to dump the results of its efforts onto a printer for later reference. Two further options are available. Wordlist provides an alphabetical list of all the words from the dictionary in memory that can be created with characters in the string you have given the computer — Scrabble fans take note! Alternatively, selecting the Anagrams option forces the program to attempt to use all the characters in your input string in one go. Much of the output is gibberish if you try to make a sentence from it — a little human filtering is necessary if you're after a witty anagram. A subtract option allows characters to be removed from the string if you spot a particularly neat substring you'd like to build on with the remaining letters.

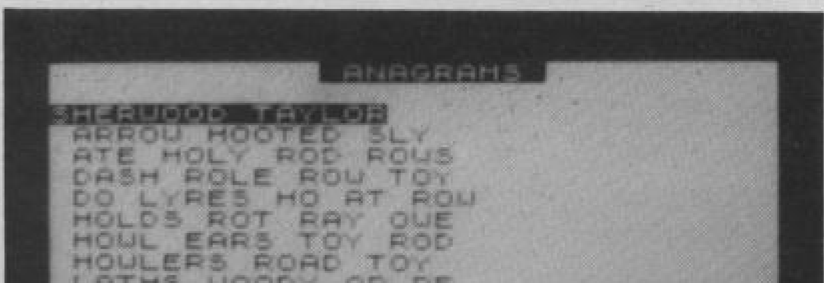
In tests, when *Anagrams* was used to scramble the names of some of the CRASH team, some very interesting combinations were produced. Gary Liddon for instance produces 'an odd girly', and Clive Marles Sinclair (not a CRASH staffer) produces the slightly cruel 'cries in a small vile car'. Azed have tweaked their dictionary just a little bit to encourage some funnier output, and some very interesting phoenetical anagrams can result. Naughty words have been removed from the dictionary — so smart alecs keying in Spiro Agnew won't be rewarded in quite the way they expect!

The flip side of the cassette contains a word game, *Xo-word* which is a cross between Scrabble and noughts and crosses, played against the computer. A 4x4 grid occupies the left hand part of the screen with each cell containing a letter. Both players start with a rack of seven letters selected at random and take turns to choose a cell and make a word of four letters or more which includes the letter in the grid. At the start of your turn you must select a square by moving the cursor into it with the arrow keys and then attempt to claim it. Success leads to the player's token — an O or an X being entered in the grid and the word appears in the table on the right of the screen.

The aim of the game is to claim a line of four grid positions before the computer. A cell can be reclaimed from the opposition — but you have to add to the letters in the word that 'occupies' that grid position and come up with a longer word. Pressing P allows you to pass a turn and change some or all of the letters in your rack by keying in the ones you want to change followed by ENTER, while a press of the J can provide a helping hand by jumbling the letters in your rack.



The main game screen from XO-WORD, and yes, there's CAM playing the computer. At least he hasn't won a game yet!



A screenful of anagrams derived from 'Sherwood Taylor'. With a name like that, he's probably one of Cameron Pound's friends . . .

CRITICISM

● **" This is really quite an interesting and well put together little package from a small outfit. I found the Anagrams program the most entertaining, and couldn't resist going through the names of all my friends (and enemies) seeing what the program would come up with. Puzzle and crossword fans will no doubt be able to put it to more serious use. The game on the other side of the tape was quite challenging, but it's a shame there isn't a two player option. Being a word game, there's not much in the way of graphics, but the screen is used well. Maybe £5.95 is a little expensive, but a lot of work must have gone into sorting out the dictionary, so I suppose it's hardly a rip-off. "**

● *" I can't be bothered with word games like Scrabble, so I wasn't all that keen when given this program to review.* Xo-word *didn't change my mind about word games — they're not for me — but I had fun with* Anagrams. *There's a limit to the amount of laughs you can have out of getting the computer to make up silly phrases for you, though, and I doubt I'll keep coming back to this one. For me, £5.95 is a bit steep but I can see that some people keen on wordgames would find this tape a good buy. "*

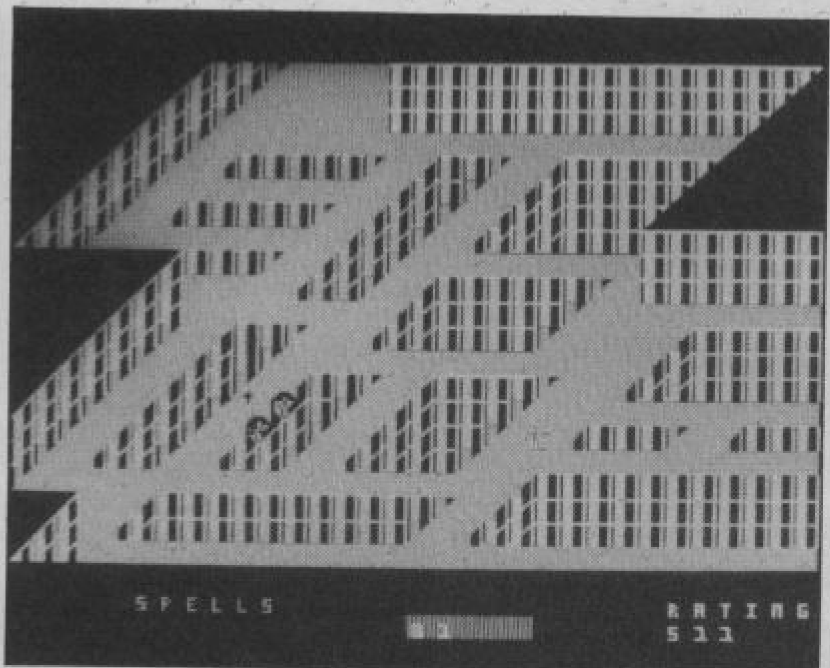
● " *Anagrams* is definitely fun. Just load and go! I enjoyed the word game on the other side too, although the presentation was a bit basic and unexciting — it could have done with prettier graphics and maybe a bit of sound to jolly it up. Perhaps there wasn't room with that huge dictionary, I don't know. Overall not bad value if you like word games, and I look forward to seeing the other tapes that Azed are doing. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: follow the prompts for Anagrams; P to change letters, J to jumble your letters and Q to quit in the game.
Joystick: N/A
Keyboard play: no problems at all
Use of colour: basic
Graphics: okay for a text only package
Sound: none
Skill levels: two in *Xo-word*
Screens: one in the game, menus in *Anagrams*
General rating: Bound to appeal to word puzzlers, a useful utility combined with a passable game

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	55%
Playability	71%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	58%
Value for money	49%
Overall	**64%**

REALM OF IMPOSSIBILITY



Little stick men scamper around in one of the dungeons from REALM OF IMPOSSIBILITY

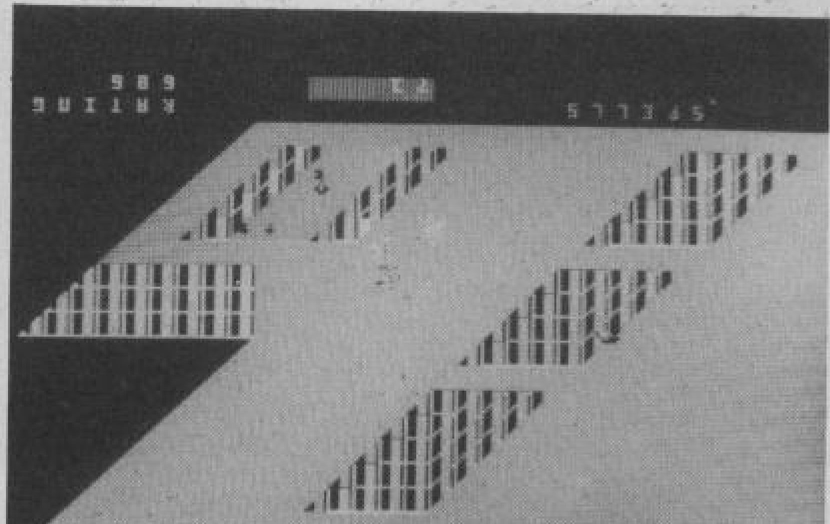
Producer: Ariolasoft
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Mike Edwards**

Realm of Impossibility is a one or two player arcade adventure where the object of the game is to enter thirteen different dungeons and recover the items that are found therein. The front end of the program presents a menu when it has loaded and once the one or two player option and level of difficulty (1-4) has been selected, it's time to move to the dungeon selection screen. The thirteen dungeons are presented in a menu and when you begin play some of them are 'locked' — items from other dungeons have to be collected before you can enter them.

Select a dungeon, load it from tape and the quest can begin. The playing areas are presented in a scrolling 3D format and each occupies several screens. As can be expected the dungeons are far from empty, and a variety of unpleasant creatures live inside them including zombies, snakes, spiders and terrifying deadly balls all of which home in on your poor man. If one of these touches the character then a certain amount of energy is taken off his energy counter at the foot of screen. You only have one life to play with, so care has to be taken to avoid contact with the denizens of the dungeons wherever possible — and energy restoring objects can be collected to boost flagging spirits.

Exploring the dungeons is rewarding: useful items such as spells with which to confound the attacking nasties, and food, can be collected by running over them. Magic available includes Freeze, Protect and Confuse spells.

Some of the mazes have multi levels which are connected by ladders. Later levels have some very weird Escher-like constructions which look only a few metres high on one side, but drop hundreds of feet on the other, which can lead to an early death for the unwary adventurer. Once all the useful items in the current dungeon have been collected the player must work travel back to the starting location where a points bonus is given and the dungeon title screen displayed again. The quest can then be continued into another of the thirteen regions.



Another 3D view into a dungeon.



CRITICISM

● **" One thing I didn't like about** Realm **was the need to load in the different dungeons every time I wanted to play. There's nothing special about any of them, as far as I could see, so why weren't they all put into memory together? The graphics in the game are far too small and indistinct — just one character square, and they flicker awfully, so badly I suspect the movement routines are in BASIC. There's virtually no sound at all, and the gameplay is far too easy to appeal for long. I've enjoyed some of Ariolasoft's games recently, like** Panzadrome **and** THINK!, **but** Realm of Impossibility **is a major let-down. "**

● *" I didn't really rate this game when I saw it a year ago on the Commodore and it has lost the few redeeming qualities it had in the conversion. I found this game totally unplayable and uncompelling. The graphics are so small that the only way you can tell your character from the rest of the mess wobbling around the screen is that it is a different colour — and it's still difficult! The screens are often garish and the use of 3D is misleading. The minimalistic instructions left me guessing what I was supposed to be achieving — and the on-screen prompts were sufficiently illegible to be worthless. What are Ariolasoft doing releasing a game like this in 1986?. "*

● " This piece of dated US software is one of the worst Spectrum games I've seen in a long while and it must be an embarrassment to any American programmer. The graphics are appalling with some of the worst attribute problems I've seen since 1982. The characters are tiny little things with no personality or animation — the sort of thing Spectrum users said farewell to yonks ago. Why there is need for a multiload system I just don't know — the game is by no means large and when compared with today's standards it just pales into insignificance. The instructions are poor and don't even tell you the keys! The only other thing I can say about this is steer well clear, if it's arcade adventures you're after then look elsewhere. "

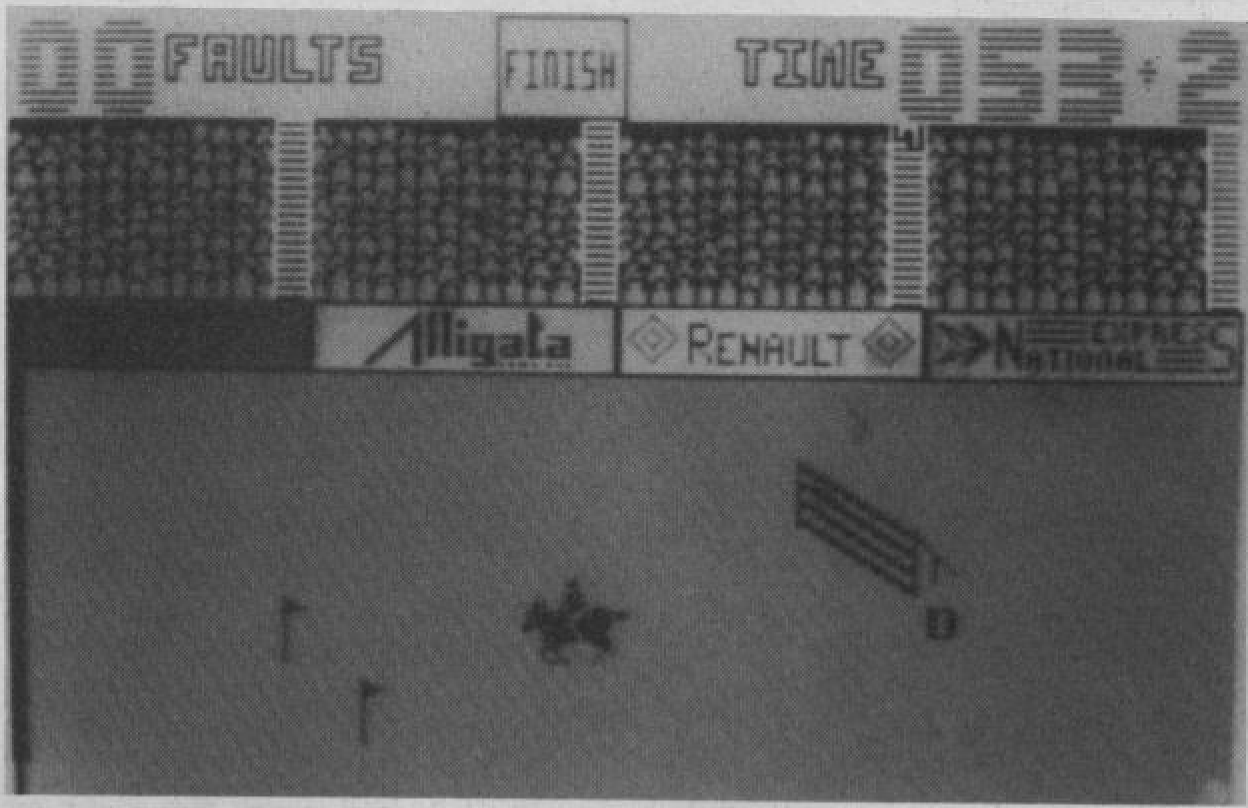
COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, X left, C right
Joystick: Kempston, Interface II
Keyboard play: below average
Use of colour: very unimaginative, garish
Graphics: appalling, with horrendous attribute problems
Sound: a few clicks and burps
Skill levels: four
Screens: thirteen multi-screen dungeons
General rating: Could have been a passable game a couple of years ago. A joke today

Use of computer	21%
Graphics	18%
Playability	13%
Getting started	27%
Addictive qualities	17%
Value for money	9%
Overall	10%

SHOW JUMPING

Producer: Alligata
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Elliot Gay**



Putting the finishing touches to a clear round in under 55 seconds — SHOW JUMPING from Alligata

Alligata offer you the opportunity to experience the thrills of show-jumping without having to go to the expense of buying and keeping a horse — indeed you don't even need to be able to ride to play *Show Jumping* on your Spectrum.

Once the game has loaded you are treated to a rendition of the TV Show Jumping theme before moving on to the menu screen. Up to eight players can compete against one another, in which case each rider has to choose a computerised horse from a list of steeds which, coincidentally, have been named after Alligata games. The horses are all of the same standard, so there's no advantage to be had in consulting CRASH back issues before you select a mount! In single player mode you have no choice but to accept the anonymous horse provided by the program.

The game contains six courses, of varying difficulty. In the one player mode, which is primarily intended to allow horse control skills to be practised and improved, you can choose between two skill levels before entering the arena. You have a one hundred second time limit in which to complete the course, and are allowed a total of three refusals before being disqualified. Four faults are collected for each fence you knock down and the first two refusals collect three faults each.

In the multi-player mode the scoring and time limit are the same, but the course is selected by the computer and the players take it in turns to ride into the arena. The winner is the rider who completes the designated course with the least faults — a tie results in a jump-off on a harder course, and a further tie in the jump-off is settled by awarding the top rosette to the competitor who completes the round in the fastest time.

Once the course has been selected the computer displays a schematic view of the arena showing the start and finish gates and the order in which the jumps must be attempted. Pressing SPACE moves the viewpoint to a flip-screen 3D representation of the course and the competition begins.

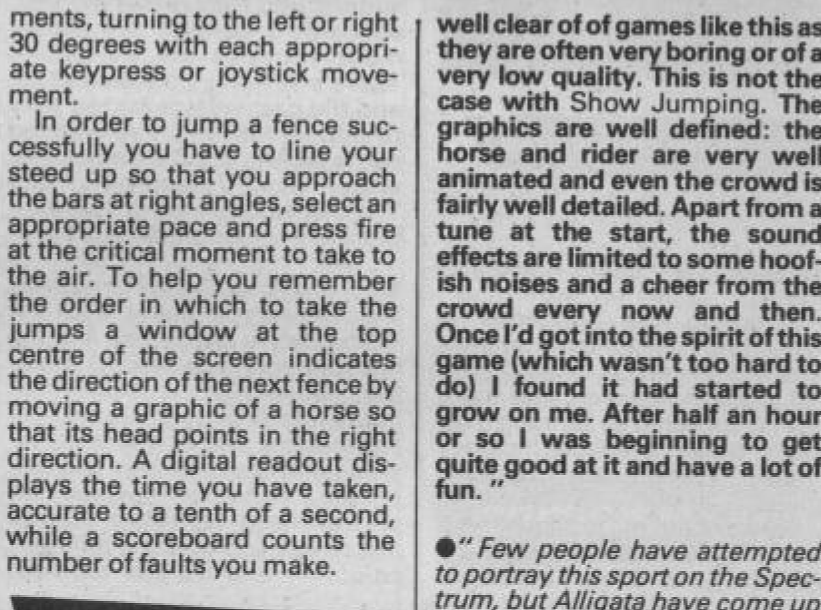
Your horse can stand, walk, trot or canter and can be speeded up or slowed down as appropriate. Fine directional control can be achieved — the horse turns a full circle in twelve increments, turning to the left or right 30 degrees with each appropriate keypress or joystick movement.

In order to jump a fence successfully you have to line your steed up so that you approach the bars at right angles, select an appropriate pace and press fire at the critical moment to take to the air. To help you remember the order in which to take the jumps a window at the top centre of the screen indicates the direction of the next fence by moving a graphic of a horse so that its head points in the right direction. A digital readout displays the time you have taken, accurate to a tenth of a second, while a scoreboard counts the number of faults you make.

CRITICISM

●" **I can't really see myself playing** Show Jumping **for long, but it certainly would brighten up an afternoon. Generally I stay well clear of of games like this as they are often very boring or of a very low quality. This is not the case with** Show Jumping. **The graphics are well defined: the horse and rider are very well animated and even the crowd is fairly well detailed. Apart from a tune at the start, the sound effects are limited to some hoofish noises and a cheer from the crowd every now and then. Once I'd got into the spirit of this game (which wasn't too hard to do) I found it had started to grow on me. After half an hour or so I was beginning to get quite good at it and have a lot of fun.** "

●" *Few people have attempted to portray this sport on the Spectrum, but Alligata have come up with the goods and made a pretty acceptable job of it. The graphics work quite neatly and look reasonably good. The people walking down the stand is a good touch, and the clippety-clop noise of the horse is quite atmospheric, too. The game is enjoyable, though its addictiveness can't last indefinitely. The price might be a bit too high, but its a good game, and quite fun too.* "



●" What a neat game! Given the Spectrum's limitations, Alligata have produced a very reasonable show jumping game with quite distinct animation for the horse, although I found it a bit tricky to cope with the accuracy needed when turning the horse. The beast keeps on going in your selected direction at a constant speed until you slow it down or it bumps into something — which may be the way showjumpers behave, but not having ridden a horse . . . Obviously this game will appeal to horse fans everywhere but most people should have a fair bit of fun with it — especially if there's a group of you competing against each other. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: tidily done
Graphics: detailed animation
Sound: good tune at beginning, otherwise minimal effects
Skill levels: two
Screens: six different courses
General rating: A very worthy show jumping simulation

Use of computer	73%
Graphics	71%
Playability	74%
Getting started	69%
Addictive qualities	67%
Value for money	63%
Overall	**70%**


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ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME
U.S. GOLD
All American Software
They sold a
MILLION
They sold a
MILLION
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BRUCE LEE
PSION
match point
MATCH DAY
ENTOMBED REPLACES KNIGHT LORE ON THE COMMODORE 64
The Hit SQUAD
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MORE FOR LESS

JULIAN RIGNALL, for it is he, puts down the joystick attached to his Commodore 64, wanders into the CRASH office and has a quick look at the games we've received for the 128K Spectrum. Between thee and me, he ended up well impressed — a diehard Commie 64 man, Jaz left the office muttering about buying the new Spectrum. Can't be bad news for Sinclair, that . . . .

ALL THE LITTLE EXTRA BITS



Hmmmm, a Spectrum with added bits? What would they be? I wondered. Wheels, a bit of whoosh, twiddly things? Nope, none of these — just extra RAM and an on-board hot plate to keep your coffee warm as you bash the baddies through the night. Well, it's not really a hot plate, but it doesn't half act like one. Anyway, what do these extra features mean to yer average gameplayer on the street?

Two 128 games are given away with the computer: *Daley Thompson's Supertest* and *The Neverending Story*. Daleys appeared on the Spectrum some time ago, and the original game had eight events which were loaded in two parts. The new 128 version has an extra four events: the javelin, 100m sprint, 110m hurdles and the triple jump along with the eight others and they're all loaded in a single go, making the game far more jolly and varied to play. Ocean have also made use of the 128's three-channel sound capability: excellent music accompanies the title screen and jingles play before and after each event. The whole game is far better than the 48K original and is a great freebie!

The other game in the package is the official adventure of the film *The Neverending Story*. Again, the original version was a multiloader, although this time the game came in four chunks. The 128 version is another single load program, which makes it far more enjoyable to play. Again it's free, so you can't really complain.

IN THE CHIP FACTORY

Moving on the the 128 games you'll have to pay money for, Hewson's take the prize for releasing the very first 128K game — *Technician Ted — the Megamix*. *Technician Ted* 48K first appeared early last year, earning a CRASH Smash for programmers Steve Marsden and David Cooke. What Hewson have done is taken the original torturous platform arcade adventure and expanded it, making it twice as big — now there are over 100 different screens and thirty tasks to complete. AAAAAGGGH you might say, those lousy sadists . . . the original *Tech Ted* was bad enough!! The gameplay is radically different and the whole program has been 'tweaked' to take advantage of the new machine's capabilities.

But don't fret poor things, each of the tasks has now been numbered so at least you know which task you're supposed to tackle next; the only problem is finding out how you complete them. Three channel music adds extra atmosphere to the game as you whizz around the factory. A special mention must go to the loader — it tells a story whilst the game loads and the music is superbly done. £7.95 buys you this piece of arcade adventuring action, only £2 more than the 48K original.

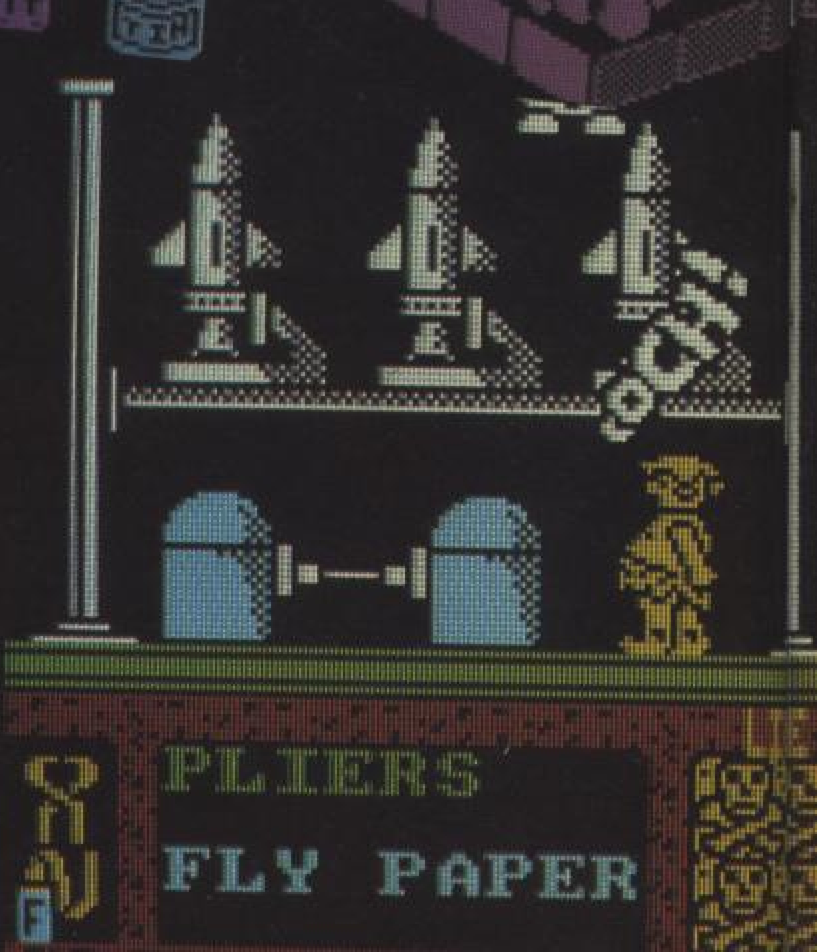
ALL A BIT OF A WHIRL



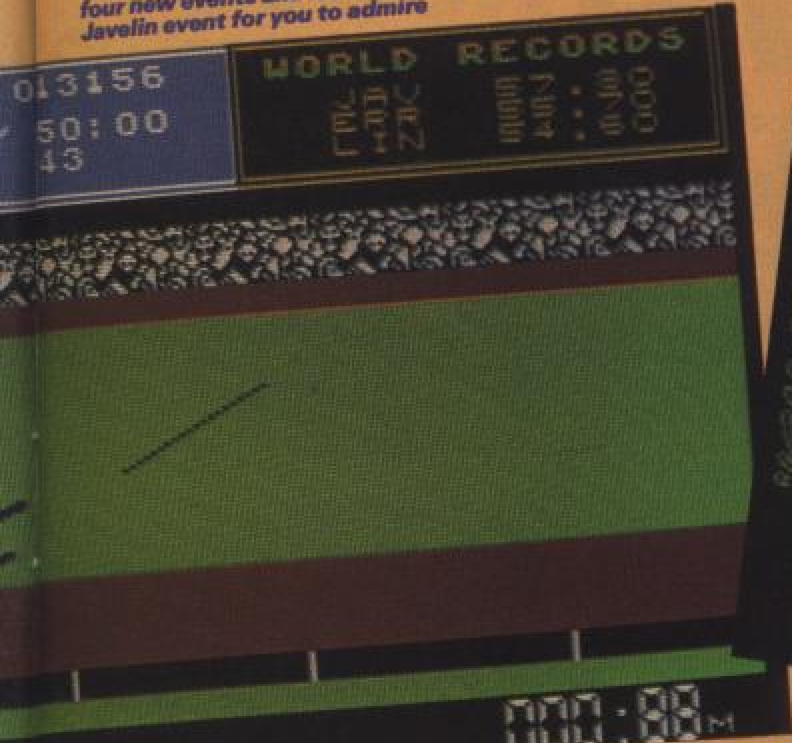
Gargoyle Games have also taken a tentative leap upon the 128 bandwaggon and whizzed out *Sweevo's Whirled*(sic) which is available for £9.95 — no increase. Capturing all those horrible Wijurs has now been made an even more difficult task with an extra fifty rooms to confuse and confound all you budding androids. There are some new images too — ginormous noses stick up through the floor (but luckily there are no huge bogeys to foul up our intrepid android's workings), fingers which make strange indecipherable (LMLWD) signs and there is also a curious lampost . . . I don't know what it does because I haven't seen the light (laugh, you philistines).

New obstacles and a new nasty lurk within Gargoyle Games' 128 version of SWEEVO's WORLD — called SWEEVO's WHIRLED. Take a glance at that conk . . .



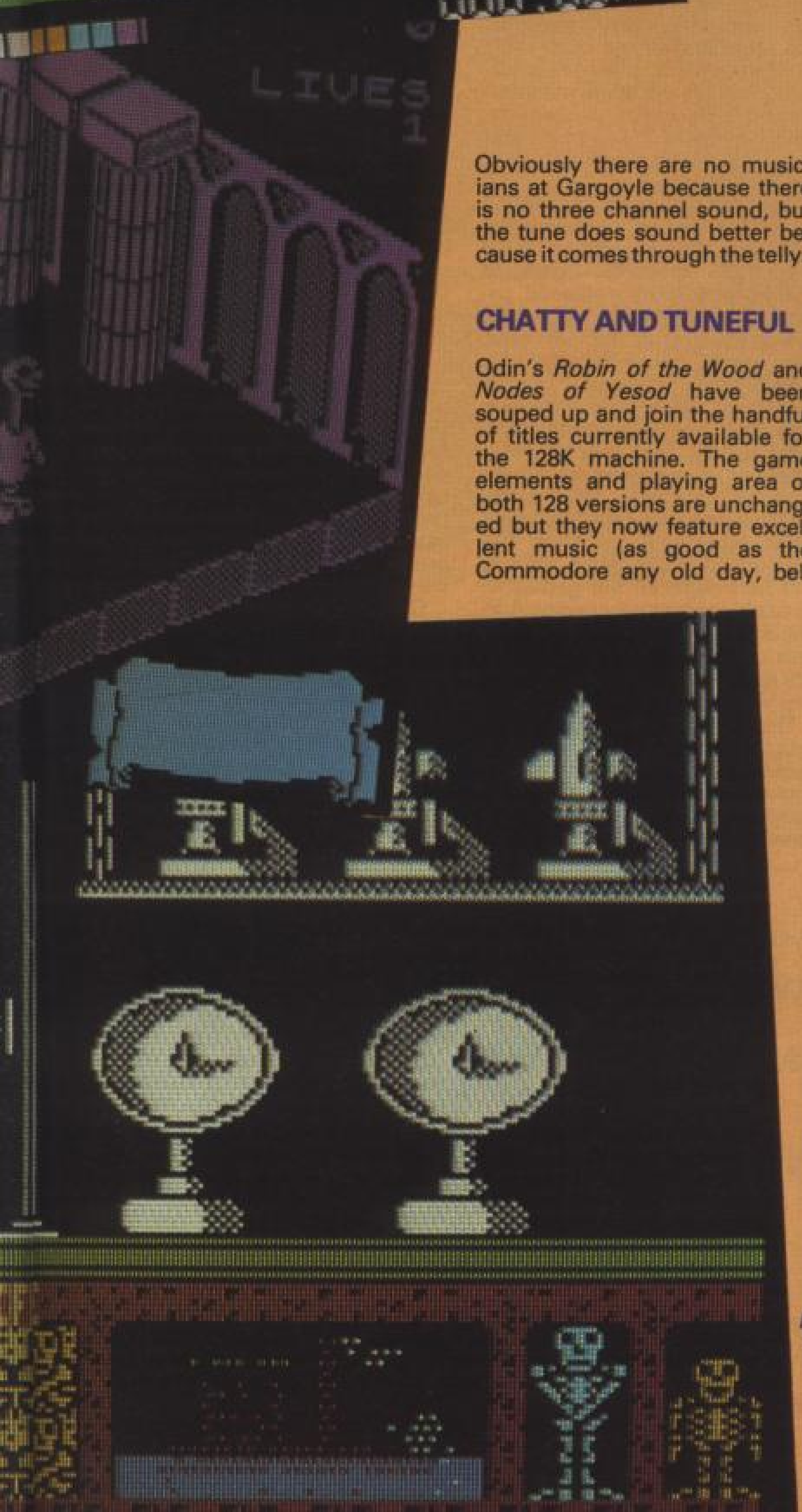


The 128 version of DALEY THOMPSON's SUPERTEST has four new events and loads in one (long) chunk. Here's the Javelin event for you to admire





By the witch queen in Odin's 128 version of ROBIN O' THE WOOD. Pity you can't hear the sound that goes with the game . . .



Obviously there are no musicians at Gargoyle because there is no three channel sound, but the tune does sound better because it comes through the telly.

CHATTY AND TUNEFUL

Odin's *Robin of the Wood* and *Nodes of Yesod* have been souped up and join the handful of titles currently available for the 128K machine. The game elements and playing area of both 128 versions are unchanged but they now feature excellent music (as good as the Commodore any old day, believe me 'cos I'm a horrible ZZAP! reviewer). Also, a nice surprise awaits you . . . both programs talk. Yup, they do, and it's not too bad — a lot better than the dalek with laryngitis stuff that the old Spectrums used to burble out. 128 owners can hear Robin shouting "OW" when he gets an arrow in a painful place, and "give me a chance!!" a few seconds before he shuffles off this mortal coil. The game welcomes the player by saying "Can you help Robin in his quest for the silver arrow" upon loading — real arcade stuff!

Nodes follows a similar path on the 128, with Champagne Charlie moaning and groaning as he trundles round the moon's underground caverns in his search for alchiems. You're also told when his life energy is running low, just in case you don't notice . . . wheee! *Arc of Yesod* is expected in the office any day now, and includes the fire option that was missing from the 48K version which should make it much more fun to play. Once again Odin have kept pretty much to the same game, but enhanced the product with speech and music. Odin are selling their 128 games for £9.95 — the same price charged for the originals.

PARADISE EXPANDED

Mikro-Gen's game *Three Weeks in Paradise*, which collected a CRASH Smash in its 48K incarnation last month, has been extended for the new machine and costs a pound extra, making it £10.95. The plot has grown a little, so completing the 128 game involves a lot more adventuring. Six new screens have been patched onto the game (go through the plug to find them). Some three channel music kicks the game off, otherwise the sound is much the same.

Mikro-Gen have added six new screens to their adventure THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE. Go down the plug to find them, that's all we'll say . . .

FOR SKUFFLE FANS

Fighting fans will no doubt be pleased to hear that Domark have added a pound to the price of *Gladiator* for the 128, making it £9.95. For the extra pennies you get two different graphics for the combatants — in the original version both gladiators were identical except for their weapons. Sound hasn't been upgraded a great deal — a sort of fairground tune plays on the menu screen and after a gladiator has been killed, and bopping noises indicate a hit on your opponent. One, two or four people can play the 128 version which includes ten new screens and a fairly polished demo mode. Essentially, however, the gameplay remains the same.



AY-3-8921A

Not much of a song title, but that's what the 128's sound chip calls itself

Meanwhile, our resident Musical expert, JON BATES managed to take a look at the capabilities of the sound chip nestling within the 128 machine. Next month he should be able to report back on the MIDI interface — Sinclair Research couldn't get a lead together for Jon in time for this issue, and he didn't fancy dabbing round inside the computer with a soldering iron. It's the only Spectrum 128 we have and Simon Goodwin hasn't had a go on it for TECH TIPS yet . . .

Not before time, Sinclair has included a sound chip in one of his computers. Clive and the boys opted for the well tried and tested General Instrument Chip: the AY-3-8921A. The chip in itself has three variable frequency tone generators, one variable noise generator, one envelope waveform generator and three volume level control circuits. The 128 comes complete with a set of instructions that make it pretty easy to program from a musical point of view.

As explained in our first quick look at the 128 by Franco the Frey, music is created in the form of a sound strings. A LET statement enables a sound string to be set up. The string not only names the notes and their octave but also contains information as to the length of of each note by prefixing a number. Any one, or all three strings can be performed by using a PLAY command. If you've brushed up on the old crochets and quavers notation, this system presents no problems, but I have visions of would-be Vangeli (Vangelises?) sat in front of their shiny new computers with the Sinclair conversion table in one hand and a book on music theory in the other.

The range of notes available is good, covering a seven octaves range. Someone had the foresight to overlap the octaves: the same note appears in the upper part of one range and the lower part of another. This saves lots of messing about, as most tunes cover more than one octave. The upper octave is set by capital letters C-B and the lower by c-b. Sharps and flats are achieved by $ and £, rests by &. The actual duration of each note is specific, and the system has been comprehensively thought out.

The music defaults to the average speed of 120 beats per minute but changes in the speed of playback from 60-240 bpm can be specified on channel A. Each or all of the three channels of sound can be replaced with channels of noise. A command M followed by a number that is the sum of the required channels will give you any combination of noise and notes.

Any phrase can be repeated. Using ( ), a phrase can be repeated once, using)) it will repeat indefinitely, only stopping on the command H. When composing, I found the best bet was to use the repeated phrase for a bass pattern, perhaps, putting the H command at the end of the melody line. It would have been far more useful if the a number of repeats could be specified — thus giving the possibility of more complex music.

The 'envelope' is a volume shaper for either notes or sound, and the eight sound shapes give a reasonable variety of effects. The speed of the effect — that is the rate of change — is very precisely controlled from 0 to 65535 (perhaps a little too precisely!). The volume for each channel can be set from 0 (off) to 15 (full on), although anything below 10 is not too effective.

Generally, the sound capability of the new machine is basic but a big improvement over the beeps of its 16 and 48K cousins. Unfortunately, the system is aimed at the musically literate and is therefore not so good for the amateur or inept.

The AY-3-8912A chip suffers from a lack of tonal variety, and I am surprised that Sinclair chose to use it. After all, it has been around a long time and this could have been an opportunity to use a better form of sound generation. Still there we are. I look forward to programs that will sidestep the PLAY command and and address the chip directly, but until then, here's a short program that renders a passable version of *Ghostbusters* by way of illustration. Next month I'll look at the 128's MIDI capabilities — just as soon as Sinclair send us a connected lead.

GHOSTBUSTERS

The Jon Bates Short Version copyright 1986

```
10 LET a$ = "M14UX4ØØWØN1C))"

20 LET b$ = "M14O5N9&&3&1CC3ECD$b5&
&1cccc3$bD5C))"

30 LET c$ = "M14O3N1c&c&$eeg&$b&$b
&f&f&))"

40 PLAY a$,b$,c$
```

The Zeros in this listing have a slash through them, while the letter 'O' does not — just in case you have problems!

UP AND COMING ON THE 128 FRONT

So what's in the pipeline? Can we expect some amazing new games for the 128 in the near future? GRAEME KIDD ponders the industry's reaction to the new machine.

The leaflet that accompanies the two free games found in the box containing every Spectrum 128 promises a host of games, all of which it implies are available now. A little 'disclaimer' reminds you not to pester Sinclair Research if you can't get hold of any of the products that are advertised.

Some of the games are listed as 128/48 games, while others appear as 128 only games. Quite a portfolio of worthy Software Names has been gathered together by Sinclair to appear in the software catalogue, but now, nearly a month after the launch, only a handful of the promised titles have actually materialised. Developing software for the new machine has involved companies in a fair amount of work — and has resulted in the delay of 48K games in at least one instance. It's anybody's guess how long it will be before all the games in Sinclair's catalogue appear. And are there any releases planned that don't get a mention in the 128 leaflet? We haven't heard of any....

The reaction to the new machine from software companies at the launch and in subsequent conversations has been mixed. Some of the firms which have already released 128K games have no plans to work on any more 128 releases until they see what actually happens to the machine, while others simply don't want to know about the improved capabilities of the 128, preferring to remain in the markets they are already happy with.

"We won't be writing specifically for the 128 machine until Sinclair has proved that the product has gone out into the market and we can see that there is a market for 128 games. We are happy to continue on the 48K machine, using multi load programs if need be." was one reaction. Another leading company with one game listed in the Sinclair leaflet has no firm plans for the 128 in the future: "we don't want to revamp our 48K catalogue — we'd rather do 128 programs and then produce 48K versions of them, but at the moment we have no more 128 releases planned."

Only time will tell quite what the new machine will offer in terms of more complex games. Technically, some games will benefit from more detailed animation, others will take advantage of the vastly improved sound capabilities of the new machine and some programs may be coaxed into running rather faster in 128K. Naturally, multiloads should become a thing of the past — for a while at least, until really ginormous games are created. So far, we've not seen anything astounding, though.

Rushing out to buy a 128 machine right now won't open up a whole new world of games playing immediately — unless you've never owned a Spectrum. There's nothing completely new and original available for the 128, yet, although 48K games sound much better when the 128 puts the BEEPs through your telly. So if you are thinking about upgrading from your trusty 48K machine, the best advice is to hang on in there for a while, and see what happens. Playing remixes of games you've already had a good go at is probably not going to be all that rewarding.

A 128K SPECTRUM FOR FREE!

Crash Competition



Win a CRASH T Shirt if you don't come top!

Ten on offer to runners up

No, this isn't an April Fool! After a little persuasive effort, your humble Competition Minion managed to persuade the Big Cheeses at Chateau Newsfield to cough up for a 128K Spectrum as main prize in this CRASH competition. David Western, from the Art Department put his special horns ons, sharpened his trident and helped yours truly to prod the financial people into action. Now all you've got to do is find the words listed in the wordsquare, complete the entry form and whizz it off to 128 COMPETITION, CRASH TOWERS, PO Box 10, Ludlow, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB, making sure it arrives before 24th May.

First all-correct entry wins the Spectrum 128 — and we'll throw in a couple of 128 games just to get you going. The next ten forms drawn from the empty 128 box will earn their senders a CRASH T Shirt — so make sure you remember to put your shirt size on the entry form.

Bonne Chance, comme ils disent en Français. (Guess where this minion wants to go on hols this year?)

A little different, this wordsearch puzzle — you didn't think your faithful Comps Minion would make your life too easy when such whizzo prizes are on offer, now did you?

R	E	T	S	W	E	R	B	I	G	G	A	M
U	R	E	G	O	R	W	E	H	T	T	A	M
N	F	N	N	R	E	T	S	E	W	N	Y	J
O	O	F	L	S	T	O	N	E	G	I	E	I
D	N	E	I	P	N	C	Q	R	T	B	R	M
R	I	K	M	N	S	O	A	M	O	O	F	N
O	W	A	J	E	D	M	M	N	D	R	Z	O
G	D	R	A	M	A	E	N	I	D	Y	D	I
C	O	N	V	K	I	R	L	E	S	Y	I	N
K	O	M	E	D	L	H	G	L	B	F	V	I
I	G	R	R	N	O	S	R	E	T	S	A	M
D	E	U	K	E	A	N	E	C	U	R	D	B
D	C	Y	C	O	M	P	S	D	Y	O	L	L

You see, I'm not going to give you a list of words to look for in this particular square. Oh no! You've got to find them for yourself. Hidden away in this jumble of letters are the names of lots of CRASH type peoples whose names crop up in the magazine regularly. You've got to find them all to stand a chance of walking off with the 128 machine - and I'm not even going to tell you how names I've hidden away (Hee! Hee!).

Get your entries in to the 128 COMP at CRASH Towers before the deadline, and mark the number of names you discovered in the square on the back of your envelope. Best of luck!

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

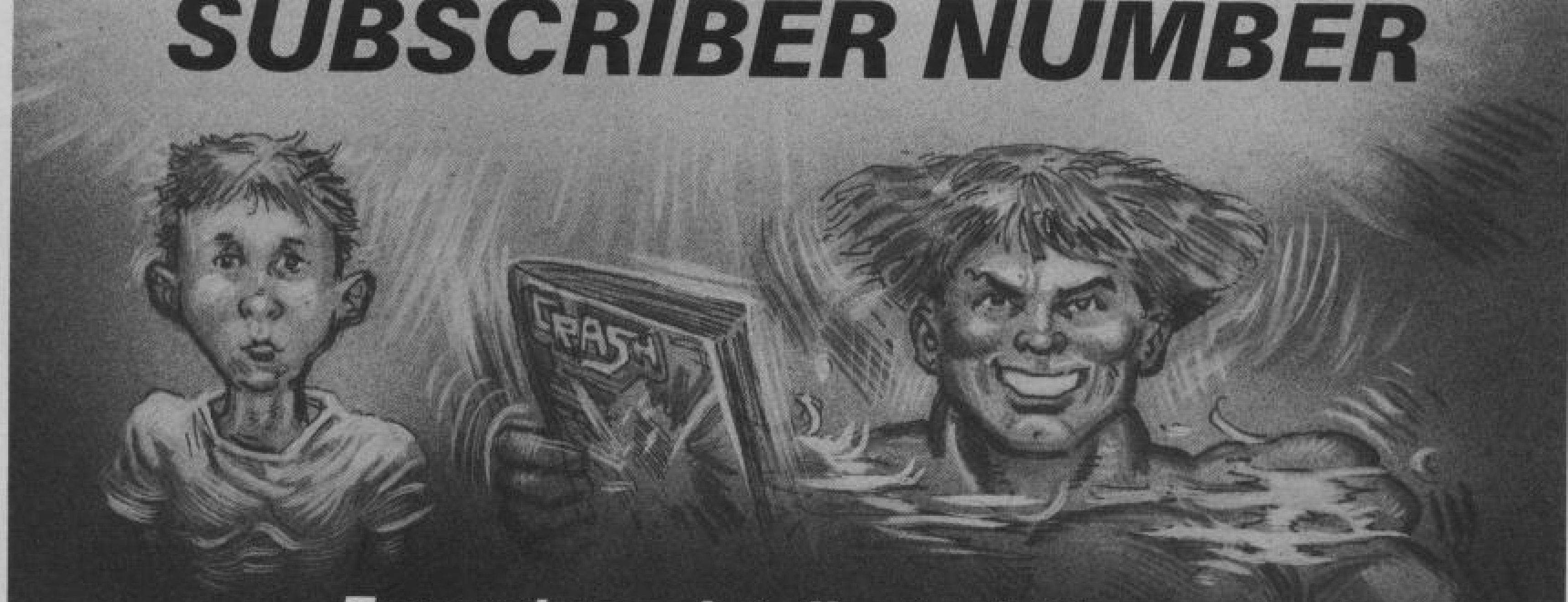
....

.... **POST CODE** ....

T Shirt size ....

Thrill to the secrets of the mystical

SUBSCRIBER NUMBER



Expand your intellect widthways!

There's no need to be a software wimp. Just a few short weeks after participating in the CRASH twelve month programme of Softwareology you could become the envy of your friends, learning about all the latest and bestest Spectrum games releases before they do. All you need is the power derived from a MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER

Literally thousands of satisfied customers derive monthly benefit from owning a MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER which brings joy and radiance to their countenances for a whole year. Soon, you could be amongst them.

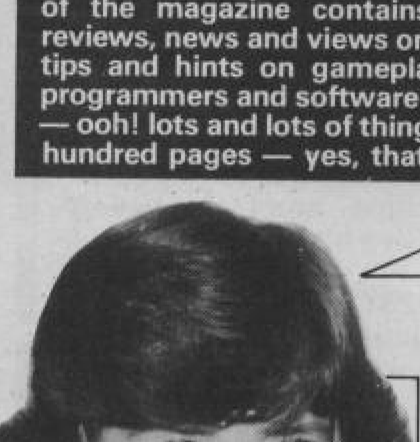
Confound your enemies who still stump down to their newsagent every month to get their copy of CRASH — your MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER will cause a copy of the magazine to pop through you letterbox once a month! Receive CRASH days before your enemies, and fearlessly say "Hah! I already know that" to their faces when they tell you which games are CRASH Smashes each month.

The CRASH Course of Softwareology, initiated by your MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER is available in twelve monthly installments, cunningly disguised as apparently innocuous copies of CRASH Magazine. Each and every copy of the magazine contains lots of competitions, game reviews, news and views on the Spectrum Software Scene, tips and hints on gameplay, game reviews, features on programmers and software houses, Oli bugs, game reviews — ooh! lots and lots of things. You can expect well over one hundred pages — yes, that's WELL OVER ONE HUNDRED PAGES — of interesting things to read every month. And lots of them will be printed in pretty colours, too.

For the piffling sum of £15.00 if you live in mainland Britain, you too can become the owner of a personalised MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER and a member of an elite amongst Spectrum game players, capable of claiming discounts on games ordered from Auntie Aggie at CRASH Mail order. All you have to do is quote your MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER with your written orders and Aggie will let you have 50p off each individual game you're ordering that costs more than £5.00. (The MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER is not powerful enough to obtain extra discount on general reader offers, or on programs that cost less than a blue one . . you can't have everything.)

If you want to become a member of the powerful sect of people who possess MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBERS whizz a cheque or postal order for £15.00 if you live in the UK or £22.00 if you are a European person to Guru Denise, Mistress of the MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER. Her cover address is CRASH Subscriptions, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB, so write to her there.

If you live outside Europe, it's best to drop Guru Denise a line, so she can work out how much it costs to prepare your personalised MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER that will cause twelve consecutive issues of CRASH to wing their way to you by magic.



"Oh, and be a dear will you and fill in the form below, not forgetting your post code. Don't forget to choose which issue of CRASH you want your MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER to begin work on — it takes a few weeks to process your MYSTICAL NUMBERS you know" **Guru Denise**

Name ....

ADDRESS ....

....

.... **POST CODE** ....

PLEASE MAKE MY MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER START WITH ISSUE :

Take no gyp from Softies!

LLOYD MANGRAM'S FORUM



I've said it in the past (and it's always true) that I've received a ton of letters, but this month has passed all expectations! Before settling down to sorting everything out I had typed in over 11,000 words without any replies (the usual FORUM runs to approximately 6,500 including my replies)! The reason lies in the torrent of letters about the December CRASH cover (*Friday the 13th* and the Christmas Special issue. This month, however, most letters are concerned with the December backlash rather than directly with the cover and Domark advert. There have been so many that I'm afraid I've been forced to edit them severely down to the salient (look it up) points, so sorry if your entire missive has been shortened. Before diving into the December back-backlash, here's a very serious letter from fellow journalist Tony Bridge (adventure columnist for *Popular Computing Weekly*), who has some hard things to say about the Christmas Special.



TEMPORARILY DISGUSTED

Dear Lloyd,
Throughout this letter, please disregard the fact that I write for another magazine, *Popular Computing Weekly* — I'm a 'spare-time' journalist and as such, am a member of the great CRASH-reading public. I have absolutely nothing to do with the administration or editorial policies of the magazine: in short, I am not acting as a representative of *PCW*. The following remarks come from a temporarily disgusted (though not yet disgruntled) reader.

CRASH is the one magazine that I will buy, sight unseen and with no lengthy investigation of the contents at the bookstand. The 'Xmas Special', therefore, even with an asking price inflated by more than 100%, was too good to resist. As an extra issue, between the December 85 and the January 86, it seemed a good, if expensive, Christmas present to myself. Of course, there was page after page of adverts — only to be expected — but nevertheless, there were a few reviews and a short story, an overview of 85 by yourself, and several pages of Brewster: all in all, a good bonus for the end of the year.

How naive I was! It wasn't until the February issue appeared that I realised how I, along with every other poor innocent reader, had been duped by Newsfield: there will be others, more worldly perhaps than I, who would not have been taken in by your cynical manipulation.

Let me explain; £1.95 is a hell of a lot of money to spend on a monthly magazine (how kids managed to rationalise the outlay I don't know). CRASH, as I've said, is uniformly excellent, and well worth the usual 95p — and a bonus Christmas issue would have been welcome, and I would have been glad to pay a little extra for the work that would obviously have been put into the issue by the staff of the magazine. But strewth, Guv, this was a regular monthly edition!

Before my eyes gave way, I analysed as such as I could be bothered of the difference between this 'Special' issue and a typical 'normal' issue, the December one in fact. Your own overview of the year's happenings was an extra feature, as was the two-page short story (excellent, more of those wouldn't go amiss): but apart from these, it was more of the same — or, rather, less of some things and more of others.

Ads, for example: December's 170 pages contained 62 full-page colour ads (I couldn't face counting the little black and whites scattered all round the place) — 'Xmas Special', 78 colour ads in 194 pages. Well, it's Christmas and understandable that software houses should want to advertise their seasonal goodies. Competitions: Chrissy must be the season for competitions, as we were offered 14 against the measly 4 in December's issue. The games reviewed, as indexed in the December issue, totalled 23: this figure rose to 25 in the 'Special'. And Robin Candy was graced with 9 pages (including 2 pages of a map) rather than the previous issue's 4 (OK, 2 and two halves!). That's the 'more'; but there were only 3 pages of Forum in the 'Special' against the 10 of December. Derek Brewster came off lightly, with 8 pages rather than the 9 of December. Editorial suffered a little, the total in the 'Special' being 92, against the December issue tally of 95 (I've included everything here, such as Winner's Pages etc). Oh, I nearly forgot the huge double-sided poster: on its way to the dustbin, it fluttered open to reveal an old CRASH cover, I didn't see the other side. still, it probably came in handy to someone and was a bonus, after all.

I'm sorry to bore you with all these figures, but they are not irrelevant to the argument. Looking at the 'Special', it seems





that there are a lot more adverts, at the expense of just about everything else — editorial content is way down. To the customer, it would seem that he or she is paying £1.95 for more ads, more competitions, just a couple more reviews and less of everything else. I was amazed to learn, some months ago, that magazines can actually be given away, as it is the advertising revenue alone (ie, the number of advertisers that can be persuaded to buy space in the mag) that dictates the size of the magazine, not subscriptions, newsstand sales and so on. Another interesting fact that may not be immediately apparent (though it would be after just a few second's thought), is that competitions are just another form of advertising — the prizes are offered, free of charge to the magazine by the company involved.

Why, then the inflated cover price of the 'Special'? During the same period, Newsfield published ZZAP! at just 30p more than usual (several more pages and quite a few prizes) and AMTIX! at the same price as the previous issue (quite coincidentally, its close rival in the market place, *Amstrad Action*, also kept its cover price the same: hmmm). As I've pointed out, it is advertising revenue alone that dictates a magazine's size and profitability and not the cover price — and I believe that Newsfield's pricing structure over the Christmas period has been cynical and uncaring of those readers (like me) who have supported CRASH from its beginnings as a Mail Order Catalogue. There's obviously no need for such a huge price hike — £1.50 might just have been in keeping with the seasonal spirit, but 100% plus . . . ? Such a crass and obvious manoeuvre still leaves me, after four weeks of pondering about it, bewildered and shaking with disappointment. I shall continue to buy CRASH as I believe it is still one of the best computer magazines available, but I can't ever again find it credible in serving the interests of the reader.

Tony Bridge, Langley, Berks

As you say, Tony, hmmm. Before going into depth, may I say that I've had lots of letters with kind things to say about the Special — more, probably, than those complaining. Okay, honesty time. I've been around CRASH long enough to know how it all ticks, so I think I'll be speaking for most people working at Newsfield. First off, there were some of us here, myself included, who felt the price hike was far too severe (the previous Christmas issue was £1.25 at the same size). However, as a journalist, you must know that decisions as to size and contents of any mag are taken far ahead of the actuality of putting it together, and all I can say in our collective defence is that we thought there would be far more editorial than there was. Why? Well for one, more advertising than expected was booked, but most importantly far less software was released in time than expected. In February's issue we were swamped by the late Xmas releases to the point where there wasn't time, let alone space to fit it in.

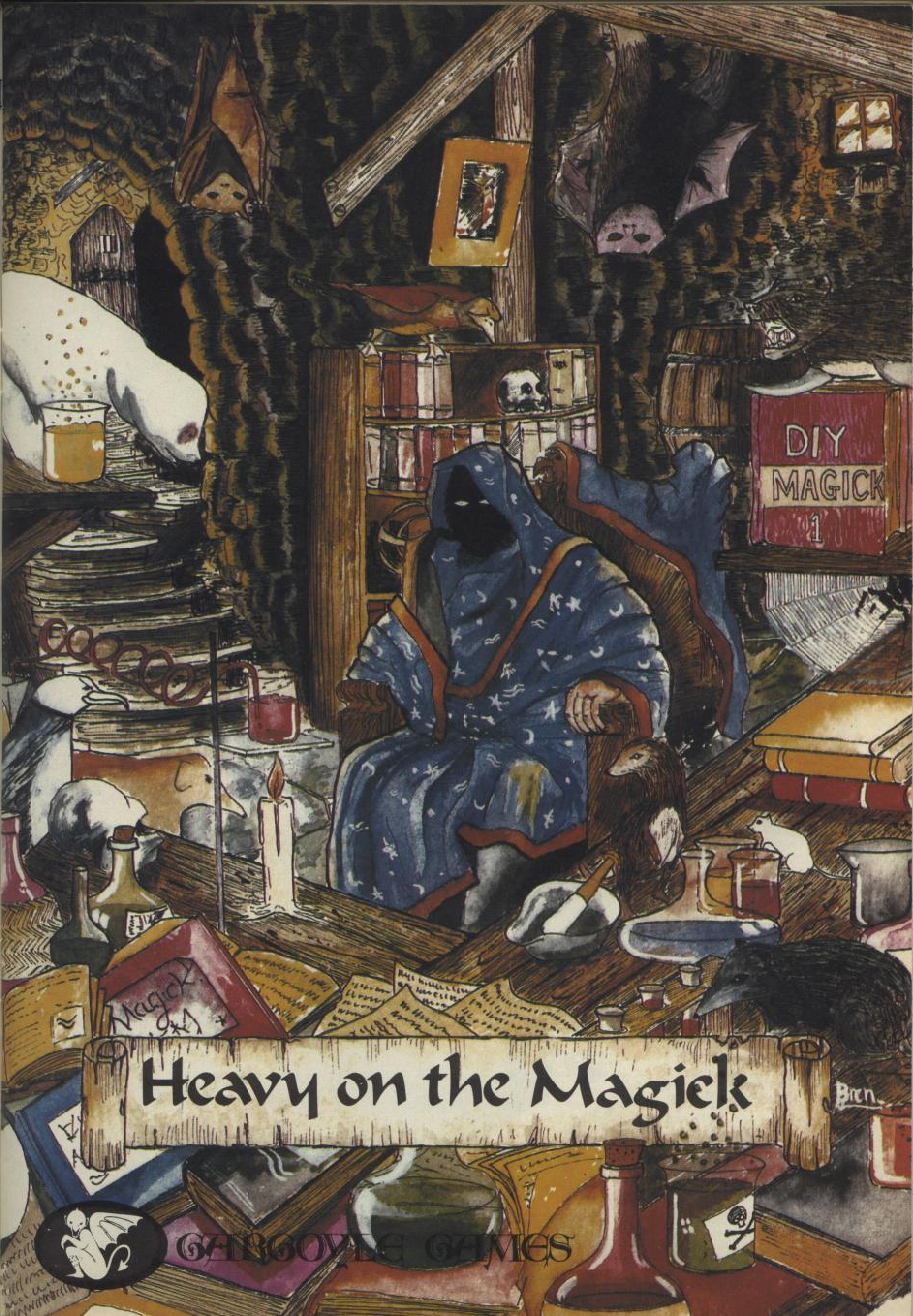
Now an important point is that CRASH is fixed at a maximum possible 196 pages (excluding any loose leaf insertions like the poster). After this number of pages the mag would have to be 'perfect bound' — the sort with the glued, flat spine. This is supposed to be prestigious, but the process costs a lot of money, worse — it ruins 2-page spreads because you can't see all of the centre area of the pages, and worst — you wouldn't be able to put it in your binder.

Your editorial/adverts analysis shows an improvement of only 8 pages over the December issue, although the poster did add another 16. On this score, I'm sorry you disapproved. Over the many months since CRASH No 1, we've received countless requests for the cover to be used as a poster, and I think many readers found it excellent.

To your point about free mags paid for by advertising, I can tell you that to date there hasn't been a single issue of CRASH where the advertising revenue would have paid for the mag and allowed us to give it away like a freesheet. There simply aren't the magnitude of advertisers in this business to support us that way. As far as I am aware, Amstrad Action **did** *raise the price of its Christmas Special — there was no 'price rigging' going on there between the two publishers, I assure you!*

To sum up, I think we all did our best to provide a good value issue for Christmas, we were slightly defeated by the available material for review, and I think we all agree that the cover price was set far too high at an early date. As a consequence of our collective feelings, there has been a significant attempt to return the cost to readers. The Feb issue was packed and for the first time there was colour on every editorial page. Now with this CRASH there is the 24-page Robin Candy Supplement Special which is effectively a free present to the reader. These moves may not make full compensation to those, like yourself, who felt ripped off, but I hope it shows that Newsfield IS credible in serving the interests of the reader.

LM


DIY
MAGICK
1
Heavy on the Magick
Bren
GARGOYLE GAMES



THE BACK BACKLASH

Dear Lloyd,
After reading through issue 25 of CRASH, I noticed a letter by Mellany Robinson of Surrey saying that a lot of the covers of CRASH 'have great sexual overtones.'

There is only one word I can think of that sums her letter up — BULL****. Before she wrote to you I bet she never thought about the 'great sexual overtones' in TV advertisements, or whether her family gets *The Sun* or *The Star* (who have famous page numbers we all know) and whether her nine year old brother looks at these.

She also states that 'I also don't see what skimply clad women have to do with computers', well, what does a man wearing black and doing various stunts have to do with Milk Tray?
Karl Bullimore, Lincoln

The outraged parents who wrote to you have a valid point but I urge them to think further. If they are concerned about the influence the media has on their kids they should examine more than a magazine's front cover. Children of all ages can experience violence and horror just by watching TV programmes like *Masters of the Universe* through to *Knight Rider* and the *A Team* all of which depict scenes of over the top violence.

This however does not excuse your magazine from being insensitive. By publishing material that is in bad taste CRASH is adding to a bad situation and Domark should be lobbied not to produce games like 13th. It may be a 'bit of fun' but the connotations of such material may be far reaching.
Martin Wright, Chigwell, Essex

As an old crinkly of 33 with a 'lad' of nearly 10 I must take to task C Hayes in your last issue. My 'lad' found neither the cover or said pages 'frightening and horrible'. No doubt C Hayes and his/her moral majority would say 'Ah yes, but he's been brought up on a diet of TV violence and video nasties' — not so!, we very rarely watch TV except for childrens, sports, and family entertainment programmes and we don't possess a video recorder.

C Hayes goes on to mention that he/she works for a 'NATIONAL NEWSPAPER' — wow!! considering that 90% (a CRASH Smash?) of these bastions of good taste print in one day more 'shock Horror', muck raking, pictures of topless girls, death and distress, than CRASH could print in 100 years he/she has got more front than Samantha Fox!!! I suggest that C Hayes gets his/her own house in order before critising others, and lets face it, it was all in fun anyway and we all need plenty of that in our lives.
PR Tinker (Mr), Sutton, Surrey
PS I personally have encouraged 2 friends to buy CRASH and when I asked my newsagent to send back his 'NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS' his answer was unprintable in CRASH, but fine for any Daily!

I don't suppose many parents stop their children watching programmes like the *A Team*, which I think you would agree, is a lot more violent than a picture. Enough said.
M Horgan, Erdington, Birmingham

Most of the letters printed (re: the December CRASH) seem to reflect an angry minority who think they should hide their children from nasty pictures that have the remotest chance of warping their minds. From my own experience of school life their minds will be warped by older children anyway.

I hope you continue your service as it is. Nothing is puke making about a CRASH cover.
James Swinburn, The Rectory, Churchstanton, Somerset.

Three of the letters were from parents and the other one was from a sister. The actual children didn't write in to complain did they because in my own view the kids probably liked the cover and the parents complain because they think it is degrading and not fit for their childrens' eyes. (This also applies to the so called 'sexually explicit' covers as well). I think









the cover isn't horrific at all and after all it's only a picture. The covers are down-to-earth and aren't stupid like some other magazines, which will remain nameless.
The other point which was mentioned by the parents was about the advert on page 39. The ad is suitable for the game in my view because the game is based on a cert. 18 film and an advert with poncy pictures on would look daft. So all you pathetic parents out there leave CRASH alone and go back to arguing with your neighbours.
A Schofield, Bradford, W Yorks

Boy are you a turkey!
In your Forum (Feb CRASH), you had a big section on sexual overtones and violence. In this there were many nasty complaints, some of these you only just managed to wriggle out of, and then what to do you do? You only go and blow it all by putting in an advert for 'THE LEGEND OF THE SCANTILY DRESSED, SHOULD BE CENSORED AMAZON WOMEN' which was a load of badly drawn rubbish anyway, and a rude piccy of a naked woman from MIKIE. YOU JERK!
About the violence bit, its a lie, and you'll find that the people who read 2000 AD are the nicest folk you could wish to meet. (If you disagree, me and the boys'll be round to LUDLOW to sort you out. You have been warned)
Mark (I, of the Hairstyle) Duncan, High Barnes, Sunderland

I was disgusted at the issue 23 cover. Yes I was disgusted that this cover drawing was not made into a full size Oliposter! What, I hear you say. We thought that the cover in question was an excellent piece of work by Oli, and people who despised it must be soft in the head or something. I didn't realize that you had turned into a comedy and jokes magazine. This is the impression I got after reading the letters on THAT cover in issue 25. 'Sexual Overtones' and 'computerized sex-orgies' indeed. The only things I agreed with in that section were your replies, and the fact that RA Barustain said he might be regarded as a 'reactionary old fuddy-duddy'. Quite right Mr Barustain! I applaud Oli's artwork, and was fascinated by the On the Cover profile on him. In fact the Xmas Oliposter was so good, I almost bought two issues, just so I could hang up both sides of the poster.
Martin Hall, Welwyn, Herts

Okay, I think that's all there's room for on this subject! Thank you to everyone who felt compelled to write in defence of Oliver's artwork — he was beginning to wonder whether to go into exile!
LM

TOO ORIGINAL FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

A slight break with tradition here — as I started off with Tony Bridge's letter, and then went into the Domark back-backlash, it meant pushing the letter of the month further back into the column. Fear not, though, for here it is . . .

Dear Lloyd,
I don't know if anyone else has noticed but there are certain games which are just too original for their own good. I refer to games such as *Deus Ex Machina* — a game which received very good reviews but never really hit the charts with any impact. At the moment I can see a number of other games which in my opinion are in the same category, namely *Tau Ceti* and *Gyroscope*. It is just a sad fact that peoples' taste excludes games such as these. Personally I wouldn't buy any of these games although I recognise the fact that they are all highly original, well designed games which have received good reviews.
What games would I buy? . . . Games which I enjoyed in the arcades — *Commando, Yie-ar Kung-Fu*; games which have captured my attention through magazine ads and reviews — *Sorderon's Shadow, Way of the Exploding Fist, Shadowfire* among others. Now all these games are original in their own way but they have another factor which sets them above the bunch. What is it? The answer — I don't know! But I do know that this unknown factor is what each of these games has and will from hereon, be known as 'The K-Factor' (after me, Keith). I'm sure you will agree that what I have said is true - if a game lacks the 'K-Factor' it lacks impact.
Isn't it brilliant to see games getting better and better in such a short space of time. You don't have to go back to the early days to make comparisons in programming skills — compare this year's games with last year's and you'll see what I mean.
Finally, did you know there is a school over here called Tir Na Nog; and just recently a new Jewellery Exporter opened in our village itself called Tir Na Nog!
Kevin McClearn, Co Down, N Ireland

It's nice to see someone who thinks things are getting better! I must say, looking back on the past 20 months or so, I'm amazed at how far Spectrum games have progressed in quality both of graphics and ideas. It's almost as though the assumed limitations of the machine have forced programmers to supercede themselves each time they write a new game, and I'm sure Sir Clive never imagined for a moment, the things people would make his machine do. Anyway, Kevin, for your encouraging thoughts, you get this month's £20 worth of software of your choice, on its way.
LM



BATTLE OF THE PLANETS
RETAIL £9.95
BATTLE OF THE PLANETS is the Space simulation that was selected for the National Computer Games Championship
MIKRO-GEN Unit 15, The Western Centre, Bracknell, Berks. Tel: 0344 427317
Steinar



HOW COME?

Dear Lloyd,
Here are some baffling questions about a game review in issue No25: How did this game get 96% overall? How did this game become CRASH magazine's best game of the year? Have the members of CRASH got shares in Martech? Are the CRASH reviewers insane? Are we talking about the same game? Was this review a Russian form of code to help the KGB?

You've probably guessed the game. Yes it's *Zoids*. I find it a boring game. Why did your friends at CRASH like it so much?

As always, I took heed of CRASH's advice and spent my hard-earned money on this game. After reading my way painfully through the mass of instructions, I loaded the game (which I found the most exciting part).

Am I doing something wrong in destroying this 'enjoyable' game? Please tell me how you destroy the city domes to get the pieces of Zoidzilla.

Finally, the cassette says that the 'battle begins'. Does this mean that Martech are going to continue the story of the Zoids (more money!)?
N Carter, Hereford

My 'friends' at CRASH enjoyed playing the game, in fact they thought it was excellent, that's why it got 96% overall. I haven't heard whether Martech intends a sequel, but I would have thought it likely.
LM

SPINIES ON THE INCREASE

Dear Lord Mangram,
Let me introduce myself, my name is Viscount Thrumblewiszt P.R.A.T. and I'm chairman of the world famous and rapidly expanding Spiny Norman appreciation society. 'Well what's that got to do with a computer magazine' you might think, well if you dig up September's 85 issue of CRASH and turn to the feature on Odin Computer Graphics then the penny should finally drop. There on page 43 displaying a screen from *Robin of the Woods* is our Lord and Master himself, that immortal personage Spiny Norman.

Who? I hear you cry, well let me fill you in on his illustrious career. Spiny first hit the big time when he was signed up (at a record fee for hedgehogs at the time) by the BBC to do a number of cameos in the current hit series Monty Python's Flying Circus. He then sought fame and fortune across the Atlantic, destined to become a legend on the silver screen, films such as, *A Hedgehog For All Seasons*, and his oscar winning portrayal in *The Marathon Hedgehog*. But it was probably the character, The Hedgehog With No Name in the classic, *A Fistful Of Lettuce Leaves* that won him international acclaim as a star who was here to stay. He also hit the headlines a few years ago when he returned home to pose (for an estimated 500,000) for the front cover of the second Not The Nine O'Clock News album.

So reading September's CRASH and seeing our hero about to be emblazoned on our TV screens in a new computer adventure game I waited patiently for the game to hit the shops, bought it, loaded it and played it, and played it with no sign of Spiny anywhere. Then it clicked, of course, there must be millions of other people in the same situation as I am. Odin never had any intention of having Spiny in the game, it was just a cheap and nasty low down trick to boost the sales up a bit, and if it wasn't the fact that the game is very good I'd probably sue the **** out of them.

Yours slightly fumingly,
Viscount Thrumblewiszt (A.K.A. Chris Browne), Chilwell, Notts
PS Anyone wishing to join the Spiny Norman Appreciation Society can do so by sending me a used 10 note and in return they shall receive a thank you note.

Last month I was threatened by an irate reader who intended setting his ferocious hedgehogs onto me, and now this. I'm sure Odin had every intention of starring the spiny wonder, but at 500,000 per appearance the game would have been far too expensive to market. I've just discovered, talking about the spiny insectivorous quadruped, that a retired Major living in Ludlow actually has a hedgehog society, you know the sort of thing, where they go round building hedgehog walkways over cattle grids and tunnels under roads. There's also a computer society, which says a lot about our cosmopolitan attitudes up here in the sticks.
LM

LOVE AND KISSES TO AGGIE

Dear Lloyd,
I am writing to you about that celebrity of Crash Tower's the one and only Aunty Aggie who is a credit to this great magazine. I think she is just great, she is the mailbag master the lovely letter lady who sends all your reader's this great magazine and also sends out prizes and goodies not to mention all the twenty quids worth of games to the writers of star letters, and who do you think gets the credit, Mr Lloyd Mangram the popular big spender, well I think its time good old Aggie got some fame and fortune and should have her photo printed clearly at the top of Mr Lloyd (Credit Stealer) Mangram's name on the letters pages.

Mind you I think Aunty Aggie is really Lloyd Mangram's excuse for all the problems with the output of CRASH.

If I win twenty quid's worth of software I'll forgive you Lloyd.
Matthew Bradshaw, Feltham, Middx

What output problems?! Let me tell you this, Matthew, without me writing marvellous answers to letters and encouraging you to write back, Aggie wouldn't have anyone to send goodies to in the first place.
LM

GO HANG YOURSELF, LLOYD

Dear Lloyd,
I was very pleased to see the picture you printed of the Lunar Jetman trailer. I found the trailer myself, but nobody I told would ever believe me! Now all you can say is 'Gosh'.

What about a full cringing apology to all the people you put down and a couple of weeks on the Ludlow gibbet, at the very least?
M Fletcher, Gloucester

Gosh. I know, isn't it amazing what an intrepid reader can do with some imagination and a good art utility?

JUST A QUICKIE

Dear Lloyd,
I think Design Design are wonderful.
Ruddi Martin, Aberlour, Banffshire
PS Can I have *Robin of the Wood* and *Tau Ceti* for the shortest letter mentioning Design Design?

No you can't.
LM



Ah well, all good things must come to an end. Time to put the cracking leather casing back on my humpy Hermes typewriter to ensure that the ever inquisitive fingers of a younger generation brought up on word processors don't pry and poke into its inner mysteries (Candy take note), and time to leap aboard the trusty Mangram five speed racer to hurtle back up into the hills and my small, cosy cottage. I'll be back with more letters next month, in the meantime write to LLOYD MANGRAM, CRASH FORUM, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.



REPLYING TO 'MR ANGRY'

Replying to 'Mr Angry' (Feb issue CRASH) and his accusations that software houses advertise too early to make a quick kill, here is a letter from Gary Mays of PSS . . .

Dear Lloyd,
Whilst I wholeheartedly sympathise with mr. Angry's sentiments (CRASH Feb issue) regarding pre-release advertising and understand how frustrating it must be not to be able to buy the games as soon as they are advertised, I think your answer covers the issue relatively well. I would only add that I bet he doesn't find it half as frustrating as I do when I see all that advertising expenditure disappearing from our bank balance and no product in the shops!

I would only like to add that since *Swords and Sorcery* we have not advertised any product until it has been finished.

The point in his letter I do take exception to is his suggestion that we are 'morally and ethically wrong' in taking customers' cash for an unfinished game. Mr Angry has obviously never bought a game mail order from PSS or he would realise that we NEVER cash a cheque or process a credit card until we have shipped the product. There have been times, not least during the *Swords and Sorcery* development days, when it was very tempting to cash all those lovely cheques to ease cash flow, but not once did we do it. So please Mr Angry, get your facts right before going to print — you probably don't realise the damage you can cause by spreading mis-information in a magazine as widely read as CRASH.
Gary Mays, Managing Director, PSS, Coventry



REMEMBER THE MICRODRIVER

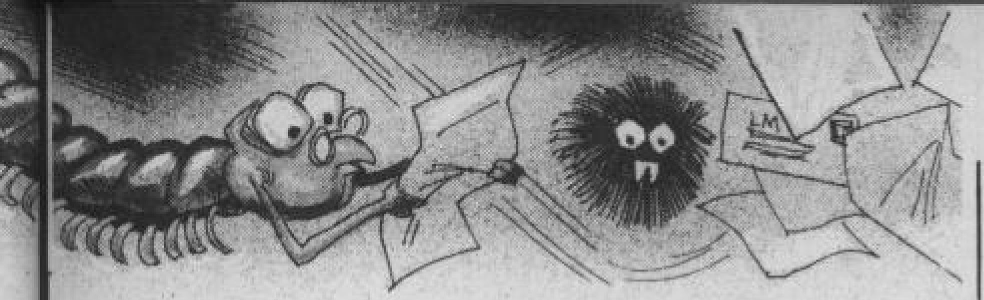
Dear Lloyd,
I am writing to you to make a few plea's — not to you in particular, but to people who probably read your magazine, to software houses, and to a member of the CRASH team.

First off, a plea to software companies to ask them to do something for us poor microdrive owners. We (the microdrive owners) bought the little machines with the intention of using them to load our favourite programs very quickly, but because the drives need careful programming, it is very difficult if not impossible to transfer the majority of programs. so please, software companies, put a save to microdrive option in your programs, or even offer a service where people can send in a blank cartridge to the software house which will record the program required on it.

I realise the question of piracy is brought to mind, but I feel sure that programmers can combat this and produce an uncopyable transfer on cartridge.

My plea is to you, or another member of the CRASH writing team. Someone could have a column every month which gives details of how to transfer certain popular programs onto the microdrives (perhaps Robin Candy could expand his pokes and playing tips section to incorporate such routines.)
John Anthony Hurst, Workington, Cumbria

It's a good point — the potential of the microdrive is sadly unrecognised by software houses in general. However, nearly any program can be put onto microdrive by using one of the utilities which so many software houses want to see banned from advertising. As has been said before, while software houses fail to satisfy their customers' needs in this matter, the tape to microdrive utilities are important. If you look in most issues of CRASH, John, you will see adverts for transfer utilities and Robin Candy did review a selection some months back (No 17, June 85, page 92).
LM



A GREAT SEQUEL

Dear Lloyd,
I recently bought Ultimate's excellent *Gunfright*. I was told at the shop, 'Looks just like *Nightshade*. On playing it I thought yes it does, but there's a game in there this time. I played it for 2 weeks solid and I'm still completely hooked. Anyway, I'm sure you've had thousands of letters saying it's crap, exactly like *Nightshade*! People who write these sort of letters need shooting with a very big gun! I mean OK it looks like *Nightshade*, but the game itself is totally different and fun to play. Just going round shooting citizens is fun itself! But the shoot out scene is amazing! So stop getting at Ultimate, plenty of other companies use graphic ideas from their previous games too, Gargoyle for example. Ultimate have also made more breakthroughs for the Spectrum too, just think what they could do with the 128! So stop singling out Ultimate and getting at them, remember the Spectrum wouldn't be the same without them.
Ian Bell, Yeadon, Leeds

Oddly enough, I haven't seen that many letters complaining about Gunfright *in the way that readers argued about* Knight Lore *and* Alien 8. *I say 'oddly', because I admit that I had thought I would, considering how alike, once again, the two games look. Nevertheless, it's back to the earlier argument about sequels, and perhaps lots of readers, like yourelf, found* Gunfright *an improved game upon* Nightshade. *You may just be right too, although I'm dubious about your credibility in enjoying* GSR! *Still, each to their own, I always say.*
LM

HELP FOR THE SKINT PINK

Dear Lloyd,
In reply to John Decimer's and AACR WISOC's letters in issue 25, I don't agree with them. They say that software companies should not advertise games yonks before they actually market the game. I totally disagree with this. For example when I saw *Rambo* advertised I thought, great I'm gonna get it, only trouble was I was skint pink, so I started to save, and by the time I had accumulated the sum of £7.95 *Rambo* had just appeared in the shops.

The fact is they advertise yonks before the market game to let CRWASOC (CRASH readers who are short of cash) have time to save money before the game is published. I'm sure wads of CRASH readers would agree with me. As for the *Great Space Race* saga, I bought the game and was pleased with it so wer nev.
Wayne Birch, Caistor, Lincs

Well it's a novel interpretation, Wayne, and who knows, you may just be right too, although I'm dubious about your credibility in enjoying GSR! *Still, each to their own, I always say.*
LM

UNCRACKED NUTS

Dear Sir,
On 11/2/85 I ordered *Nutcraka* from Software Projects. I wrote again one and a half months later to ask why I had not received the game, and the only reply I got was an envelope full of photocopied adverts for their games. Since then, all my letters have been ignored, and my cheque cashed. I have threatened legal action, but even this has failed to make Software Projects do anything. I am therefore writing to you to see if you can do anything about this. As you have carried advertisements from Software Projects in the past for this game, I feel that you should check that games advertised are actually available or at least written before publishing advertisements.
John Yeates, St Clement, Jersey

Well Nutcraka *was certainly around and available at the time we reviewed it. I can only assume that something or someone has slipped up at Software Projects in processing your order and in responding to your complaints. Anyone at Soft Proj able to help, please?*
LM

IS THIS A RECORD?

Dear CRASH,
After months of waiting, I hereby claim to be the first CRASH reader to own a Spectrum 128 in Britain. I bought it on Saturday 15th February at 9.42 am. Can anyone beat this?

I would also like to know how 128 games will be reviewed in CRASH for future issues. Will they be reviewed alongside each other or will the magazine be split in to two sections, 48K and 128K?

Either way, with the emergence of the 128 it ensures that CRASH will continue to run successfully, and long may it reign!
Andrew Page, Shirley, W Midlands

A policy on how 128 games will be reviewed hasn't yet been firmed up, largely due to the time Graeme Kidd spends in the broom closet looking for the comps minion, but I expect we'll get round to it someday in our usual, endearing fashion!
LM







CODELESS IN LODE RUNNER

Dear CRASH
I have bought and enjoyed every issue of your magazine and now write to you to relate a sad tale. Whilst shopping I spotted in one local Co-op a bin with countless software cassettes, all going cheap. I dug in and managed to come up with a cassette missing its inlay and without a price, *Lode Runner* by Software Projects, and was told I could have it for 99p.

As the RRP was originally £9.95 I was well pleased and remembered it had received a pretty favourable review (Christmas Special 1984/5).

Once home I loaded the game (and some people may have guessed already what happened next) and found a code had to be entered to start. The reference sheets with the codes on was of course missing with the inserts. I returned to the store first to see if the inserts could be found. No Luck. I was offered a refund but did not want this. I rang Software Projects to be told they would not and do not issue replacement code charts. I can appreciate the motives behind this approach but how can I prove I do not want to pirate the game? I have never pirated software. Can anyone help? After all *Lode Runner* is an old game now. I know I only paid 99p but I suspect some people have paid full price for software and subsequently lost or damaged the all-important codes. Or maybe I am unique.

Anyway I hope this serves as a warning to anyone who buys software with anti-pirate devices — DON'T LOSE YOUR LENSLOK! DON'T CHEW YOUR CHART! Also make sure that any reduced software contains manuals etc — I didn't realise *Lode Runner* was protected this way although I have bought *JSW*.

Hope you can help and keep the quality of CRASH as high as it has been for these two years.
KJ McGoldrick, (The victim of circumstance!), Thurmaston, Leicester

That's a very sad tale indeed, and a cautionary one. Can anyone help?
LM

WHERE'S THE ORIGINALITY GONE?

Dear Lloyd,
How would you like to continually receive a string of letters written by the same people, concerning the same topic? You see every time I load up a game these days, I feel this huge wave of deja-vu sweep over me. I realise that I have exaggerated a little, as no two games are exactly alike, but think of the number of sequels and such released these days. Games such as *Dun Darach, Marsport, Alien 8, Dragontorc, Everyone's a Wally, Herbert's Dummy Run, Back to Skool, JSW II* and *Monty On The Run* should refresh your memory. I'm not disputing that many of these games are excellent, but they will not benefit the market, the buyers and the producers in the long run. I mean, take a look at the time that people have taken solving the original, and compare it with the time they take to solve the sequel. Even me, one of the most hapless games players ever to grasp a joystick can average around half the time for a sequel, than it took me to solve the original. I'm sure that if you look at the letters you receive from your readers solving games and compare them to release dates of said games, you will find that I could have a point.

I suppose that half the blame should really fall upon the consumer, as we seem to be fearful of new and fresh ideas, (witness *Deus Ex Machina*), thus forcing software houses to revert back to tried, tested and tedious ideas.

In fact, I am sometimes forced to believe that many new games are really old ones with extra bits tacked on. The main proof of this being the development time between an original and its sequel. Take the Wally series for an example. After *Pyjamarama*, the others appeared within a space of months, and in some cases were solved in a space of days.

Ah well, I've said all I wanted to say, except for, here's hoping 1986 will not be the year of the flogged horse.
S Dass, Hailsham, E Sussex

Sequels have always been, and will always remain, with us. A successful formula is something every manufacturer looks for, because it is one of the best ways of recouping development costs. Look at novels, there are writers of 'popular' fiction who churn out tens of almost identical books with slight plot and character alterations, yet they remain popular because the reader enjoys the type. The trick is to keep the plotlines exciting. I think you're being rather harsh in summing up the industry thus, especially as many of the titles you listed are excellent, and the sequels frequently better than the earlier games. However, I certainly agree that there is a danger of stifling original thought, and that it is often the public who are as much to blame as the software houses and programmers.
LM

LEAVING OCEAN SMASHLESS

Dear Lloyd,
In 1985 Ocean Software produced eight high quality computer games of which only one *Frankie goes to Hollywood* received a CRASH Smash. This has brought my friends and I to the conclusion that the CRASH reviewers have (putting it mildly) something against Ocean.

This conclusion began to take shape in 1984 when the best olympic game ever, *Daley Thompson's Decathlon* (as if I have to mention the name) did not get a CRASH Smash even though at that time it was the best game ever to appear on the Spectrum. Even more evidence of this arose in issue 13 in which *Match Day, Gift from the Gods* and *Hunchback 2* should of been CRASH Smashed but were not for some stupid reason. Later that year you finally gave Ocean a Smash for *Frankie* but I believe you would not have if Denton Designs hadn't programmed it.

Then in, November along came *Super Test* which although in my opinion was not quite as good as *Decathlon* it was just as good as Imagine's CRASH Smashed *Hypersports* but only received 76%. You could reply that Ocean and Imagine are really the same company and so they got 3 CRASH smashes last year, but you won't because I know very well that Imagine have different programmers working for them than Ocean.

To be fair though I don't rate *Roland's Rat Race* or *Kong Strikes Back* worthy of CRASH Smash labels, but *Pud Pud* is worth considering.

To be honest Lloyd I can't imagine my letter getting any further than the bottom of your waste bin because you will be too embarrassed to print it in your magazine but I would consider reviewing Ocean games properly in the future or they may withdraw all their adverts from your mag and leave you a bit short of cash.

Please make sure *Rambo* is a smash — I can honestly say I do not work for Ocean Software.
Jason Harding, Stockport, Cheshire

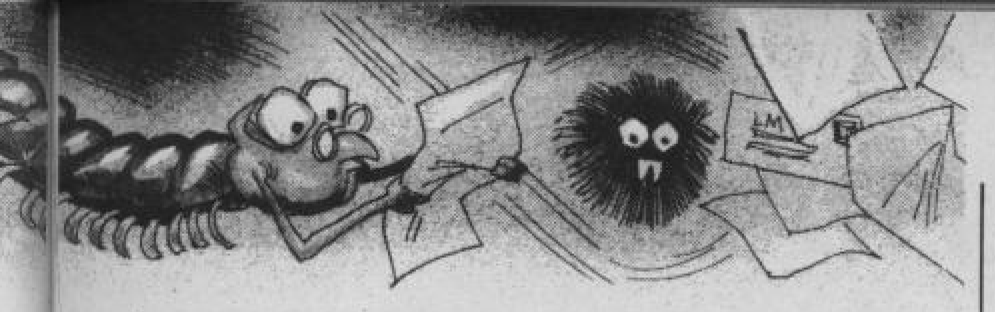
We have always reviewed Ocean games 'properly', although it rather depends on what you consider under the heading of 'properly'. I have in the recent past admitted that in respect of everyone's reaction to the games, CRASH probably got it wrong as far as DT's Decathlon *and* Match Day *were concerned. However, the several reviewers, who all played both those games, and enjoyed them a lot, still thought they just missed. Your argument that we probably only awarded* Frankie *a Smash because Denton programmed it, is a bit silly in the light of your mentioning the failure of* Gift From the Gods *to get a Smash — after all, it was also programmed by Denton Designs. I know at the time we thought it was very good, perhaps a bit slow, but mostly that it was quite original in feeling and therefore might not appeal to everyone's taste. It's often very hard to work out (especially when most reviewers really like a game) what a final rating should be when there are some reservations about its appeal to the public — after all, I get enough letters of the 'how come this was ever made a Smash?' kind. Like the next one in fact...*
LM

PIRATES OF PORTUGAL

Dear Lloyd,
I'm a 17 year old Spectrum owner. Last week I saw your Christmas Special issue in my newsagent's window. I read it from cover to cover and back again. Your magazine is just fabulous; it's something really OTT. It's so good that my friend is going to subscribe it as soon as he gets the money.

Now for the real purpose of this letter: I want to write to you about software piracy in Portugal. The problem is that there just isn't any legitimate software in Portugal. Every software shop I know sells pirate copies. Even the big computer shops sell pirate copies (the example of this is Tridus, a big shop that introduced machines like the ATARI or the CBM in Portugal and that sell pirate copies only). There is a good explanation to this situation: the prices of original programs. In Portugal a secondary school teacher earns a salary of a maximum of about £195, and that means working 22 hours per week with 3 or 4 classes of 30 students. Around here someone that has a salary of about £400 is considered an extremely well paid person (that person is considered as belonging to the medium-high class).

This isn't all, in Portugal the average worker has to work 750 days to buy himself a car, while in Germany only 135 days are required. All these figures are right (my dad is an economist and has access to several statistics). So how can anybody in Portugal afford to buy programs with £9.95 tags on? You could ask the same thing about computers, but the answer to that is quite simple, our banks provide a special credit for that as part of the modernisation effort and Timex has several factories here making Portugal one of the countries that has cheaper computers.



This way we are all pirates around here. All the other kids I know buy pirate copies and then copy them themselves. I only buy one program once in a while, but every week I get a new one from a friend. I don't think that this is wrong (me making copies, that is) because we have a saying around here, 'thief that robs thief has 100 years of pardon' (not very pretty in English, but it rhymes in Portuguese). What is the moral of this letter? Simple: sometimes the only way of selling programs is by selling pirate copies. And the retailers don't bother with your new protections, things like Lenslok are easy to get around, if you get my drift. You just have to eliminate the routine that scrambles the characters! This is all. I hope you will continue to have such a wonderful magazine. Keep up the good work!!!

Pedro Miguel Loureiro, 2900 Setubal, Portugal.

I'm not sure that there's a very easy answer to that one, Pedro! I wonder if any British software houses, dealing with Portugal have any comments to make?

ANY STREET CRED FOR STREET HAWK?

Dear Lloyd,
Where is it?! Yes you know, don't come the innocent with me Lloyd. Every morning I rush to the post hoping to find the elusive copy of, yes you guessed it, *Streethawk*. My parents are very worried, for they have seen me turn from space-bashing-mega-kid to post retriever.

Seven months ago me, and no doubt millions of space-bashing-mega-kids, took up an offer no human Spectrum owner could refuse. My first choice arrived a couple of months later and I was mildly satisfied, but the big one was still to come.

Five months later I still wait. My friends at school mock me and laugh in my face, 'what a con' they say, but I fire back and tell them 'CRASH would never do that!' My loyalty now begins to sway.

Are Ocean and CRASH on a big fiddle or has Ocean just not met its deadline (by 5 months), or has Auntie Aggie been kidnapped by LSS (Ludlow-Special-Service). I suggest that CRASH pulls its finger out or they will find many subscribers, like myself, not bothering to renegotiate our current allegiance.

SD Curt, Chelsham, Surrey

No one could blame you for thinking something odd's going on. You are indeed one of several thousands (at the last count) waiting for the subscription offer on **Street Hawk**. *Poor Aggie (and I) get it in the neck, she on the phone, me in the mail bag monthly. The harsh fact is that despite its being advertised ALMOST A YEAR AGO, the game hasn't been finished. This has caused CRASH an enormous embarrassment. As far as I know, the subs dept accepted the game in good faith that it was almost completed at the time of typesetting the subscription ad. If you look carefully, the ad does state 'not quite ready, may be some small delay' etc. No one realised at the time that the delay would be some 9 months! All I can say now is 'sorry', hang on, it is coming — I think, isn't it Ocean?*
LM





TAKE TO THE TRACK IN STYL

Two Chances to win £1,000 worth of Kart and Karting Gear, courtesy of Rainbird

Karting is an exciting sport, there's no doubt about that. Over 2,000 people are involved in the sport in this country and there are stacks of international competitions as well as UK championships for you to enter. Most people have a Kart racing circuit quite close to them — so don't worry, if you win, enjoying your prize to the full shouldn't present too much of a problem. Soon you, like Rainbird, could be on your way to the top. Remember some rather famous names in the motor racing world cut their driving teeth on Kart circuits: **Senna, Piquet, Surer, Cheever, Patrese, Fabit** and the current Formula One World Champion, **Alain Prost** to drop just a handful of names.

When it comes to Competition prizes, **Rainbird** doesn't mess around. The chaps behind Firebird's sister software house are offering two thousand pounds worth of Karting goodies in this competition.
Rainbird's got some pretty major plans when it comes to publishing software, too. ART STUDIO has won some serious acclaim — voted the best Spectrum Art Utility by CRASH it should soon be appearing on other machines. And THE MUSIC SYSTEM and THE ADVANCED MUSIC SYSTEM have really made a hit with Amstrad and Commodore owners. Anyone interested in making music, at any level, with their computer would be daft not to get hold of Rainbird's Tuneful Software.
But these major successes are but peanuts, as far as the Rainbird crew is concerned. They're going for the big time in the games market, and intend to tackle the big American software publishers at their own game, reversing the trend of American Imports. And from what we've seen so far, there's some pretty impressive product due from Rainbird's perch in the coming year.

The first Rainbird adventure game, THE PAWN, did more than raise a few eyebrows when it was unveiled on the Atari ST in Las Vegas — it stunned a few folks. Just take a peek at the picture taken from the Atari version of the game by Magnetic Scrolls. Wow! Eh? More and more text and graphics adventures are promised soon.

Strategy fans and Wargamers will soon thrill to Union Software's TRACKER, an artificially intelligent game with remote control fighting forces; underway on the Commodore at the moment Rainbird should be bringing a new brand of 3D combat to a microcomputer near you quite soon . . .

Another Atari ST product in the pipeline is STARGLIDER, a flight simulator which sets you in the cockpit of a well-heavy fighting machine. Indulge in arcade action as you get involved in Air to Air and Air to Ground combat. Argonaut Software are very busy with it at the moment, but conversions for other machines are planned.



The sort of thing on offer, prizewise. A collection of goodies outside the ZIP KART showrooms — you could be shopping there with £1,000 of Rainbird's money to spend!


Cover piccy for THE PAWN.


NEAAAOW! Zooming along the cover for TRACKER, the strategy wargame that Rainbird should be publishing soon.


The STARGLIDER cover artwork




Atari ST incarnation of THE PAWN

E WITH

RAINBIRD & NEWSFIELD PUBLICATIONS



So, as you can see, Rainbird is going for the top. Their stated intention is to "beat the rest and become the best". Now they're giving two lucky readers of **Newsfield**'s magazines, CRASH, ZZAP! and AMTIX! the chance to race for the top in the Kart world.
The Big Cheese at Rainbird Software, Tony Rainbird (they called the company after him — he didn't change *his* name, so you can tell he's a Big Cheese Par Excellence) used to be a pretty good Kart Racer before he got too involved in computer software.
Tony decided to give a couple of Newsfield readers a helping hand up the ladder of Karting success. Rainbird, the software house, has purchased a couple of £1,000 vouchers from **Zip Kart**, premier suppliers of Karts and Karting accessories. If you win one of these vouchers you'll be able to get kitted out with a complete Kart, an engine, driver's suit, helmet, gloves, boots, a kit bag to keep everything in and a paddock stand to keep your shiny new Kart on when you're not racing it.

And there's more. Uncle Tony will be on hand when you scamper down to Zip Kart's Hoddesdon HQ to select the gear and he'll help you choose and set up your equipment as well as introduce you to some helpful people in the Karting world.

So. What have you got to do to convince Rainbird that you deserve to win a super Kart Kit? Design the Perfect Kart, that's what. Get out your pens, pencils, cameras, colouring sticks, pastels, TD pens or whatever and let your imagination run riot. Technology is not a problem — design the Kart and let the next generation of engineers worry about making it a reality. Money is no object — but don't go overboard with diamond-studded tyres for extra grip or anything, unless your Kart is for Oil Billionaires to play with. Don't forget that real Karts have a maximum engine capacity of 100 cc and the motor is two-stroke. Maybe you could bend the rules a bit with the Perfect Class of Kart . . .
Two readers from the three Newsfield magazines will collect a prize.

Entries please, to **RAINBIRD KART KOMP, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB** to arrive by 20th May this year. Best of luck!

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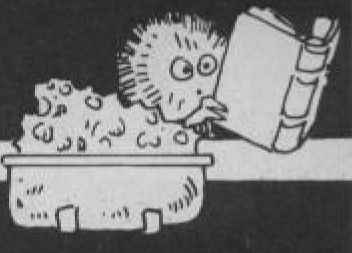
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CRASH COURSE



Matthew's Story

To my mind, one of the most interesting educational applications of the micro lies in its potential for helping those with specific learning problems. Few publishers, however, have directed themselves to this area.

Now IEC Software **has come up with some programs useful both with children experiencing certain problems, and with very young children. IEC was set up by educational psychologist, Jo Westwood, who turned to computers to find ways of helping children affected by dyslexia, often known as word-blindness.**

Dyslexic children have great difficulty in learning to read, tending to confuse letters such as b and d. Jo decided her pupils needed practice in observing the differences between letters without being distracted by their similarity. A game involving discrimination between two letters linked to pictures and associated words beginning with the sound was needed. The game element had to be particularly strong to sustain the children's interest, so that they would practise.

Jo, however, was not a programming expert, so the task of writing the game fell to teenager Matthew Wilkes. Matthew came to Jo's notice when, having been fooling around in class, his teacher asked him to write 50 lines — 'I must learn to use my good brain wisely'! The lines were duly done, but were not handwritten on school paper. They had been printed from a computer using an italic script! Jo seized the opportunity, and channeled Matthew's 'good brain' towards writing a program to her design, and so IEC Software was conceived.

Unfortunately, the company is finding it difficult getting its games accepted by the retailers, who seem to turn down small software firms on principle, regardless of the quality of their product. I hope IEC succeed in their aim of getting on the shelves of the High Street stores, but if you have problems tracking down the games, they can be obtained direct from IEC at 77 Orton Lane, Wombourne, Wolverhampton. WV5 9AP. The retail price of each of the cassettes for the 48K Spectrum is £8.95

Rosetta McLeod

LEFT RIGHT, LEFT RIGHT

Although the games on this tape are specifically aimed at children with dyslexic problems, they may also be enjoyed by many young children who are not dyslexic. The first game, *BeeDee* gives children practice in distinguishing between b and d which are often confused. The aim of the game is to shoot all the letters which start the name of the object displayed, so that, if a dagger is drawn, all the d's must be shot away.

Before the game begins, some useful hints are given which encourage the child to form a mental picture of the shape of the word. He is told, for instance, that 'the word for bed looks like a bed, and so to write b you put the bed post first', and 'the word for dog has a tail hanging down. The dog is very sad if you forget that his nose comes before his ears. So to write a d you put his nose first.'

When the game begins, a mark is deducted from the score each time an incorrect letter is shot at. The seven pictures which appear on the screen are chosen randomly from 12, and the level of difficulty increases each time.

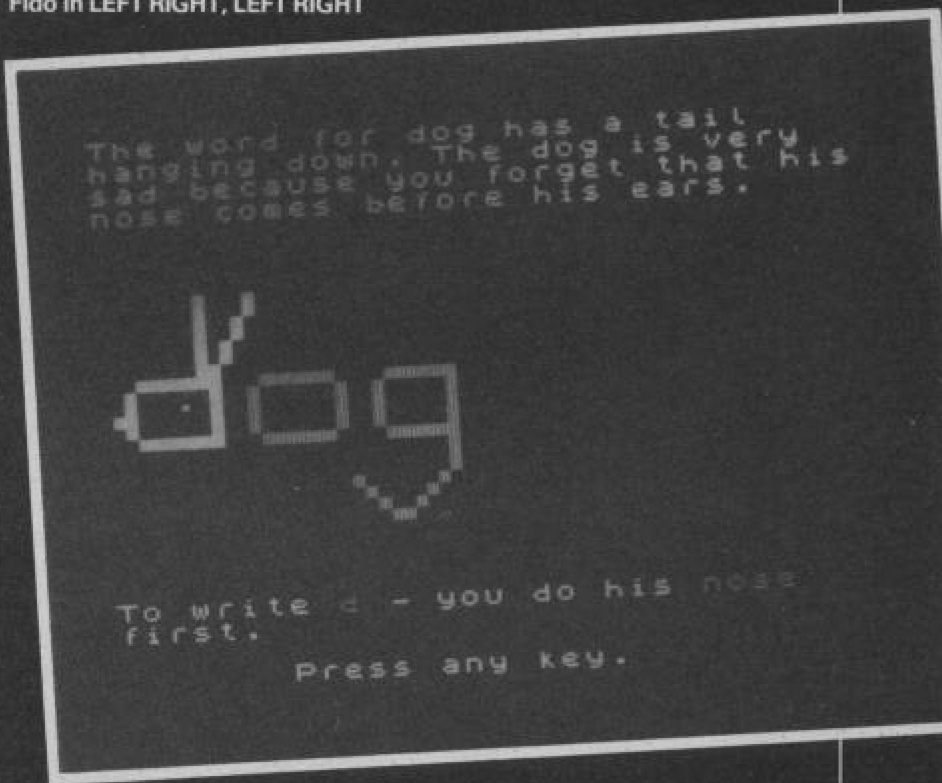
City Maze is a game which requires directional awareness to anticipate the movement of a little car. The player has to drive the car across the city without crashing into a wall, and can choose between an easy and a difficult game. The words 'left' and 'right' are displayed clearly at the bottom of the screen, and an adult working with the child, could reinforce these words as the game proceeds.

Doors is another program which reinforces the left/right concept. Behind each of the doors, clearly labelled Left and Right, may be found enemies (snakes, spiders, and skeletons), and these must be killed with the correct weapon — axes kill skeletons, fly spray kills spiders, and daggers kill snakes. To be successful, the player must read the words which appear above each door, pay due care and attention to the words for the enemies which all begin with s.

All of these games are extremely simple, with attractive and colourful graphics; *BeeDee* and *Maze* are particularly enjoyable to use. *Doors* is, perhaps, not so much fun, having less of an arcade-type approach. Having tried out these games both with very young children, and with older pupils with learning difficulties, I can vouch for their usefulness, and for their success in stimulating children to improve their performance.

Control keys:
BeeDee 2 move left, 9 move right, SPACE fire
City Maze 2 move left, 9 move right
Doors 2 opens the left door, 9 opens the right door, SPACE to go on

What a friendly little doggy! Encouraging young readers to get the letters d o and g in the right order for Fido in LEFT RIGHT, LEFT RIGHT

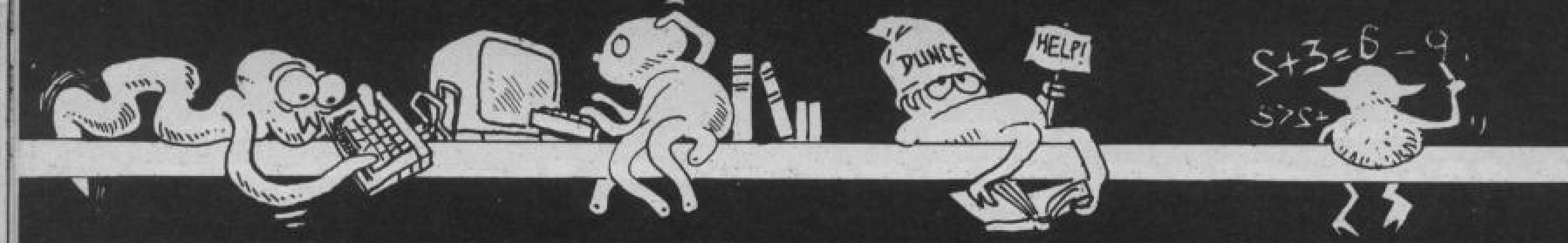


ERVADERS

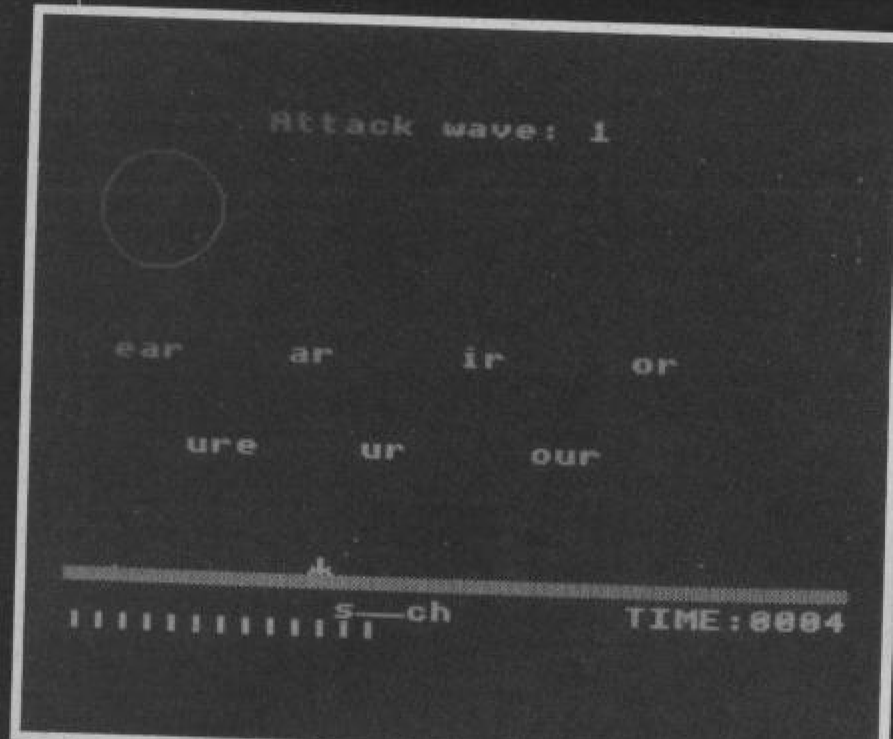
This game is aimed at children of 7 years and above and aims to teach eight different spellings of the sound 'er'. When a word appears at the bottom of the screen the player must shoot the invader which correctly fills the middle of the word.

The player has only 13 bullets to shoot all the correct invaders, and can select from eight difficulty levels, beginning with 'er' and 'ir' at level 1, and progressing to 'ear', 'ir', 'ur', 'or', 'ar', 'our', and 'ure' at level eight. At the easiest level, words such as 'thirteen' 'mirth', 'serve' and 'term' must be completed correctly.

The graphics and sound effects in this game are very appealing to children, and the ratings of performance range from 'Not bad' to ▶



We all reckon this ERVADERS player should be blasting away at the ear. Search us if we're wrong . . .



'Super-Hero'. This is an enjoyable program apart from an annoying bug which sometimes occurs when the player shoots from the edge of the screen, causing the game to crash. This bug appeared in my review copy, but I have been assured that it has been spotted and removed

The following 'testimonial' was written by one of Jo's dyslexic pupils: 'This game is not an average 'shoot them up'. It combines a space invader game with an education game. Most things which teach spelling are very boring but this is very addictive and is a joy to play.'

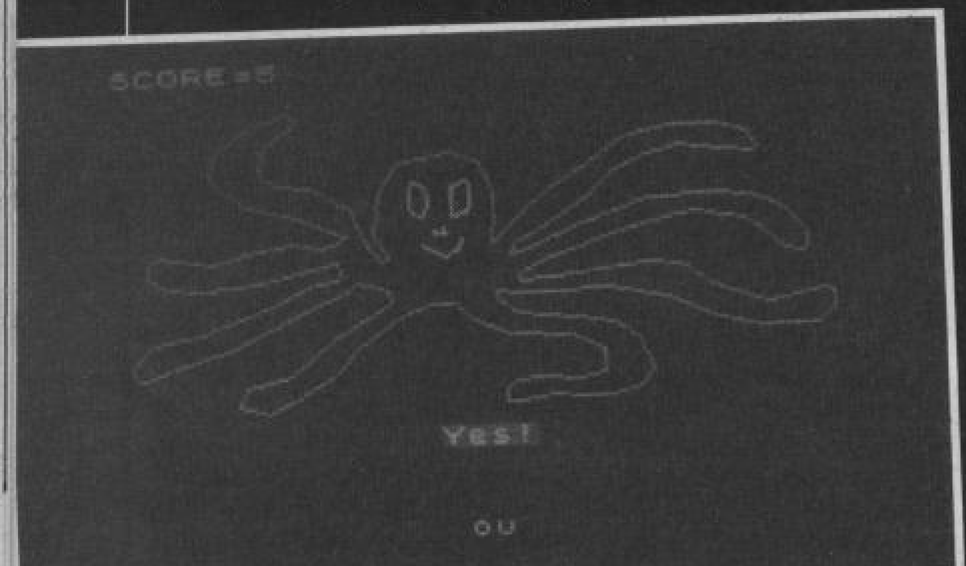
Control keys: 1, 2 or 3 to move left; 8, 9 or 0 to move right; V, B or SPACE to fire

A TO Z

A to Z is suitable for very young children, or for older children with dyslexic problems. A series of colourful pictures appear on the screen in groups of 20, and the player has to shoot the correct initial letter from those shown under the picture.

In use, the child should be encouraged to say the word aloud and then identify the initial letter sound, which can then be related to the correct lower-case letter selected. On side two of the tape, *Common Confusions* is particularly aimed at those children who confuse similarly shaped letters or similar sounds — letters such as b and d often cause problems, as do p and q. The game also allows a choice of the number of letters to appear on the screen: between 2 and 20 are possible.

I was disappointed, however, to learn that the letters seem to be randomly selected more often than not, so that the common confusions are not in fact faced. For instance, under the drawing of a pen, the letters c j n p are shown if the 4-letter option is selected, and under a diamond, the choice must be made from k k n d. Another annoying feature for me was the irritating sound as each picture is drawn. I would have liked the option of turning it off.



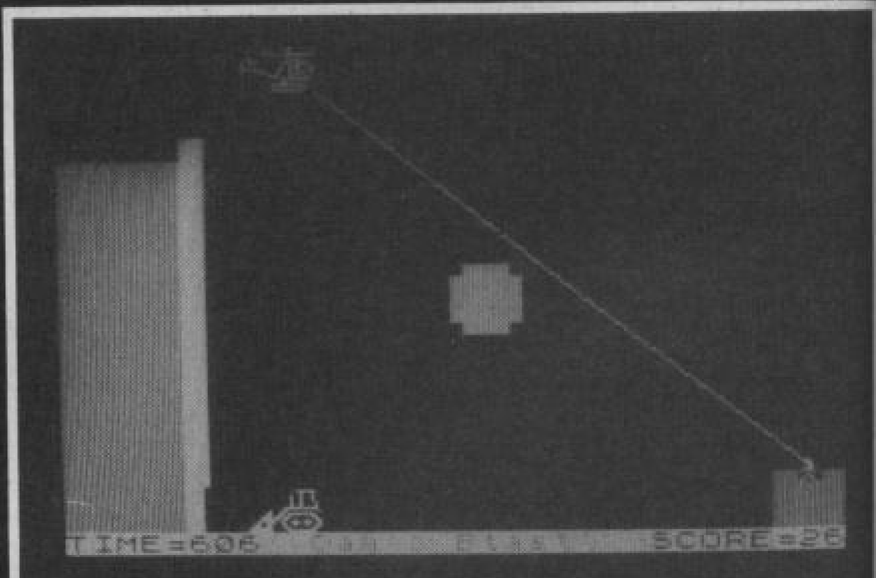
It looks like Cameron Pound, our photographer, has just got it right in IEC's game A TO Z. Clever lad, our Cam

Control keys: 2 to move left, 9 to move right, SPACE to select the letter

DAM AND BLAST

All children who use a computer need to acquire the skills of letter recognition and keyboard familiarity, and it is those skills which this game sets out to teach. Each letter of the alphabet appears on the screen, first as a capital letter then in the second part of the game in it's lower-case form; meanwhile a digger tunnels away at the bottom of the dam. The player must touch the appropriate letter on the keyboard to stop the digger, and thus prevent the water flooding the valley. The child can choose from 3 levels of difficulty which relate to the speed of reaction.

Dam and Blast 2 uses the same game format to provide a further extension of keyboard skills covering the numbers and symbols on the keyboard. This is of use for aspiring programmers, but also for



Frantic action with a helicopter and digger on screen during DAM AND BLAST from IEC

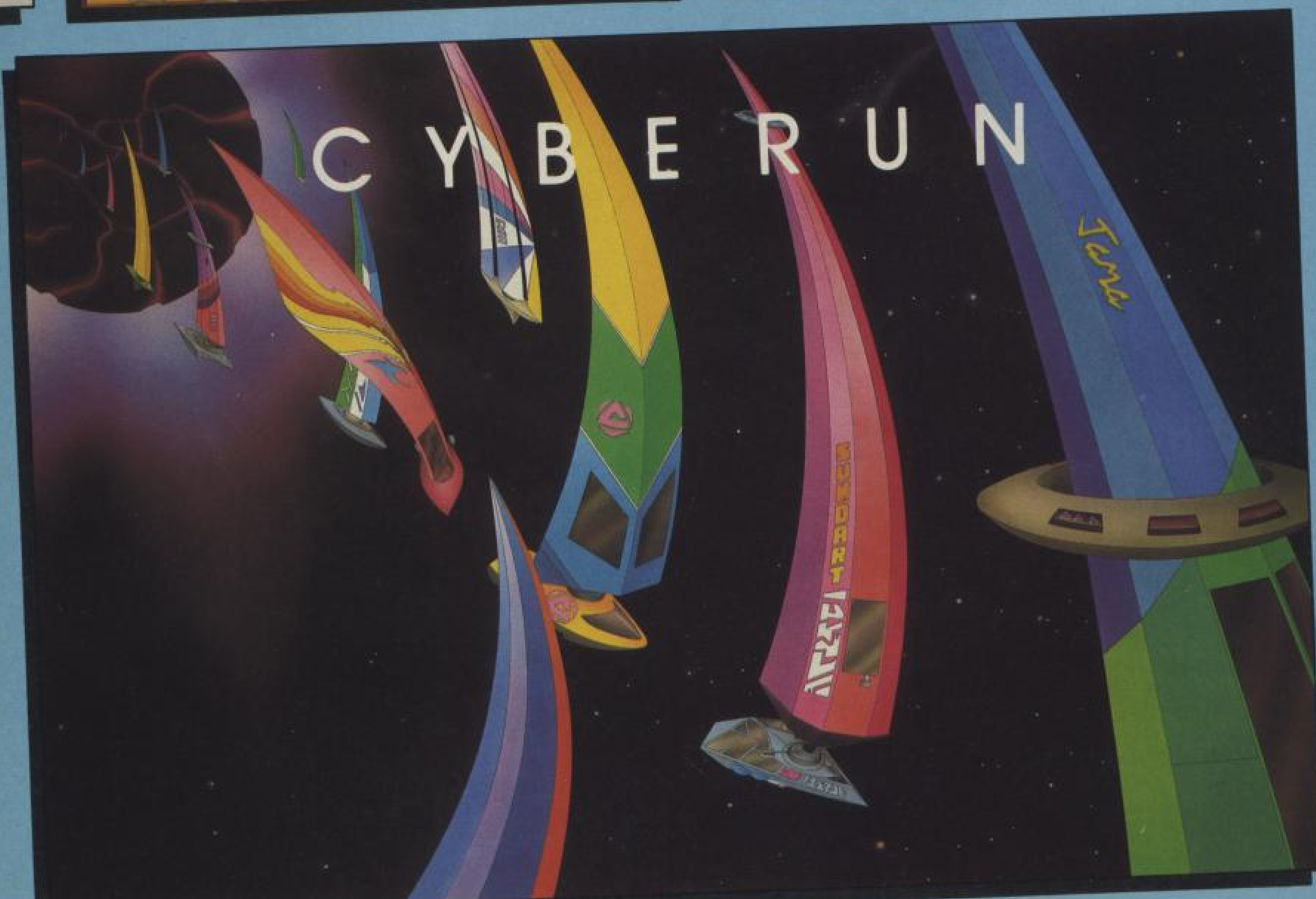
children who may be using a computer for word-processing. This game was particularly popular with the younger children I tried it out on — children who often become frustrated when their unfamiliarity with the keyboard spoils their enjoyment of a game. After a surprisingly short time, their responses became quite fast and this new skill was seen by them to have great relevance.

Control keys: after both games have been played, all the letters, symbols and numbers on the keyboard will have been used

COMMENTS

All of the IEC Software programs are very attractive and easy to use. Jo Westwood has used her experience as an educational psychologist to devise games which children will enjoy playing and which will keep them interested and motivated long enough to improve their skills. Children with learning difficulties often become bored and frustrated by their lack of success, but these games give them a real chance to do well. Matthew Wilkes, too, has used his talents to great effect, and I look forward to seeing more of his work in the future.





CYBERUN



SENDING YOUR ORDERS THROUGH THE POST

JOHN MINSON finds out how to play games without switching on your Spectrum, spends a day in London doing so and comes away with dreams of world domination. All in a day's work for a CRASH writer, really . . .

Fed up with the limitations of being the only Elite-level space trader in your galaxy? Or do you find orc slaying a dispiriting occupation when there's not even a tavern where you can swap tales of tribulations with trolls? While nobody can deny that the micro revolution revealed a new world of adventure gaming for many people, there's always the limitation of such sci-fi or fantasy quests being solitary occupations, without the satisfaction of competition on the human level.

"Go down to Islington Town Hall," said Graeme, "You'll find the first national convention of pbm-ers there." "Pbm-ers?' I asked, "sounds somewhat worse than the DT's." "Pbm is play by mail," he explained patiently as he booted me out of the door. So I ended up walking out of the wintery north London weather into the crowded convention hall. What manner of beast is the p.b.m.-er? And what is his or her relevance to computer users?

HISTORY LESSON

A brief history. People have been playing games by post ever since stamps cost a penny — an old penny, mind — and letters were delivered the next day. At first it was the standard board games . . . . chess or *Diplomacy* with two moves a week. Obviously not a hobby for the impatient. Then, in the last twenty years came a games revolution. A young man called Gary Gygax invented something he called *Dungeons and Dragons*. It was the first of the role playing games (rpgs).

Many other rpgs followed, becoming a major part of the games industry. For anybody who has been asleep for the past five years, the idea is this. In a rpg the players play the roles (not really — who'd have thought?) of characters in a world created and governed by the referee, often known as the Game Master. Whether they become barbarians slaughtering orcs or spacemen shifting alloys around the universe, the players submerge themselves totally in their characters. It's not hard to see the link between these games and the adventures that found their way from the mainframes to the micros.



Meanwhile there was also a resurgence of interest in board wargaming, with cardboard counters and maps — another genre that has found its way, with varied success, into the confines of 48K of memory. But both types of game suffer from the fact that they take a lot of time and call for regular meetings of the participants. Rpgs also need the moderation of a Game Master who has all the rules at his fingertips, while too often the strategy games are swamped in tables and dice rolling.

In 1971 Chris Harvey started a new sort of gaming in Britain — one which which was already becoming established in the States: games played by mail, with a skilled referee processing the turns submitted by players and sending them details of the effects of the actions they had requested. And the idea caught on, so that players began to communicate with each other outside of the games, planning alliances and secret pacts to strengthen their positions. More games appeared, more topics, and now this — the first official congregation of postal players.

HUDDLES

The first impression of the gathering was one of enthusiasm. People milled around a variety of trestle tables, getting details of games with names like *Starglobe 3, Beyond the Waves* and *From the Mouth of Hell*. And from the other side of the stands came a similar sense of involvement in what was being done. And down in the bar (my first port of call — natch!) groups of people were huddled round their pints in animated discussion of strategies, moves and games — the great and the small, the good and the bad. Feeling quite lost I set out to look for Dr Nicholas Palmer, who Graeme had promised would fill me in on the scene.

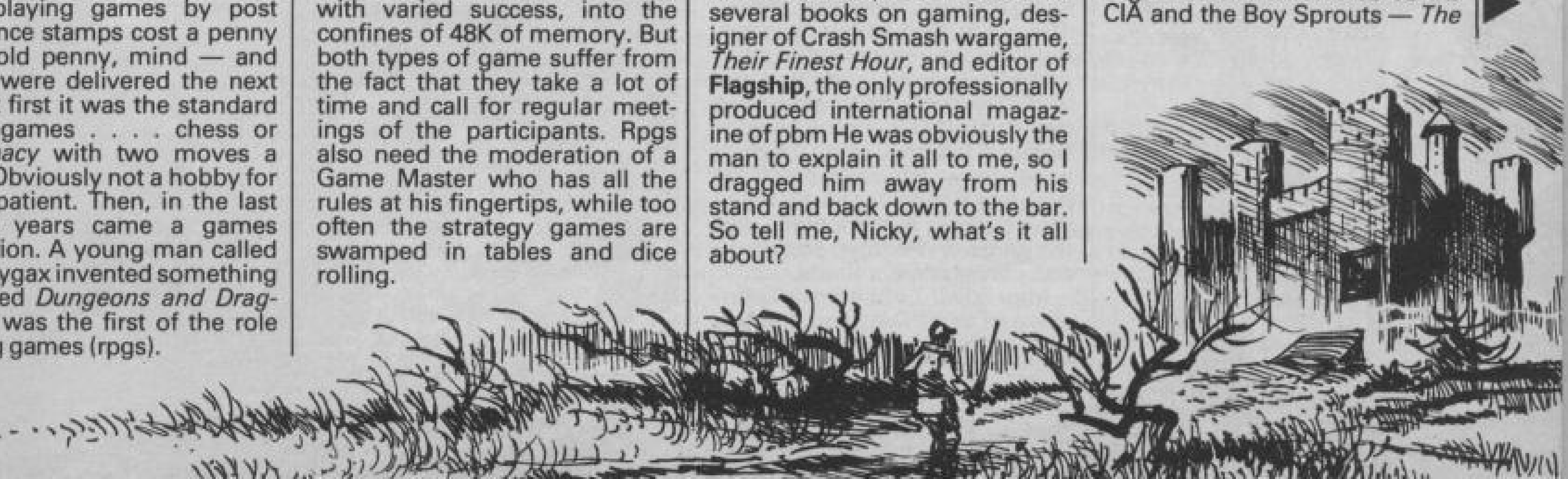
Nicky Palmer, as he is known to his readers, is an author of several books on gaming, designer of Crash Smash wargame, *Their Finest Hour*, and editor of **Flagship**, the only professionally produced international magazine of pbm He was obviously the man to explain it all to me, so I dragged him away from his stand and back down to the bar. So tell me, Nicky, what's it all about?

"Most games are science fiction or fantasy, with anything from fifteen to over one thousand players. You take the role of a particular character — you may be leader of a band of explorers or a space tyrant or virtually anything else. Every two to four weeks you send in the orders for you character and the forces at your command and some days later you get the results, which depend on the decisions of all the other players."

It all sounds rather slow moving, I observe. "That's the biggest drawback," Nicky agrees, but goes on to point out that you can work out your moves when you want — you're not tied to meeting other players at a set time. Should you miss the deadline for your next move, games include default actions, though you won't do well unless you throw yourself into the action.

FROM FOOTBALL TO KINGS

So what sort of role could I take on? "There are around forty UK games," Im told, and Nicky shows me a listing in Flagship. Well, the variety's certainly there because next to the star captains and kings of mythical lands are transport barons in *Railway Rivals*, soccer managers in *Football League* and those covert individuals who are trying to control the world via organisations as diverse as the CIA and the Boy Sprouts — *The*





SENDING YOUR ORDERS THROUGH THE POST

Illuminati. This last mentioned is an official version of a successful strategy card game, and despite the cost of licenses there are other pbm official versions including, I'm told, the inevitable *Dungeons and Dragons*.

Right, but who does it all appeal to? "There's a strong base among students. There are two main types of game really, attracting different types of player. First there's the role player, attracting people from **White Dwarf** (the long established British rpg magazine) who want to expand, and there are the chess and wargamers who are looking for strategy." But it's definitely on the increase. "There's been enormous growth in the last two years. The appearance of magazines has helped. At the hard core there are those who play more than one game."

Not surprisingly computers have their part to play in all of this. Some games are primarily computer moderated, while others are more open in the options for your characters, though even in these hand moderated games there's liable to be a micro humming away in the background, processing data. Obviously the humble Spectrum lacks the memory to compete with the Macs and other machines that do this work, though there's no reason why a QL couldn't be called into service, Nicky agrees. And the link between pbm and micros is stronger than both sharing a family tree leading back to the rpg.

Mike Singleton, author of *Lords of Midnight* and its related games, ran the first pbm with really good graphics, *Starlord*. In fact his games for Beyond, with their combination of role playing and strategy suggest nothing so much as adaptations of postal games for the micro's limited memory.



STARTING OUT

Quite what happens during a game will depend upon its type, but the form is always the same. Having registered and received the starter pack, the cost of which quite often includes the first couple of turns, you plot what you will do. Nicky suggests I look at **Mitre Games**, who are keen to improve the visual standards of the games, whether of the maps and diagrams that they produce on a Mac to accompany turns, or the glossy boxes which contain the introductions to the games and are even available over the counter in some specialist games shops. One of their latest games is *Midgard*, so let's use that as an example.

Midgard is a game of mediaeval power politics. As the second son of a noble family you are thrown out of the house with a couple of hundred followers, a few friends and some cash. The problem is to make your way in the world. In the hostile environment of mediaeval England you may find it a good idea to join one of the seven major factions, such as a religion, or pledge allegiance to another family. There are also minor factions, but if you're feeling really ambitious you can try to go it alone, and may even try to start your own faction. Depending on your success, fate may bring you into wars, in which case you'll be presented with maps to detail your success in campaigns, but the game is weighted so that no one player can dominate.

Impressed by the professionalism of what I've seen, I return to Nicky, who tells me that the British scene is on the whole efficiently run nowadays, after some early teething troubles, and that the obviously amateurish appearance of the bad means that they're soon weeded out. How long would I play for then? "Some games have specific victory conditions. Others — generally the role playing games — are open ended." Fine, but isn't all of this going to end up rather costly?

SPENDING MONEY

According to Nicky it need not burn too big a hole in your pocket. Initial enrolment may be free though more often a fee is charged, though it's seldom bigger than five pounds. Then it costs, on average, £1.50 per turn, though as that's only once every two or four weeks it won't add up to much over the year, and consider all the time you'll spend pondering the best actions for next time, which is an important point . . . . you can't just rush off your orders. The scale of the games means that you'll have to give a lot of thought before you commit any decisions to the post. And you'll need time to contact other players who you may have joined in alliances — and to read your quarterly copy of Flagship for hints, tips and general news of the pbm world. Plus you may find that an individual game has generated its own fanzine with information for players.

As Nicky told me at the start, the growth of these games has been fast over the past few years, so I wondered if he had any predictions for the future. As well as the general growth he foresees, "A continuing trend to spread into new areas — political, power struggles and war games, sports games. there will be an expansion into greater sophistication with better graphics — that's been the Achilles' heel so far. List output isn't enough any more. And several people are getting into electronic gaming," Nicky adds. "In fact, several of the stateside software companies are moving into play by mail because it's a more vibrant market."

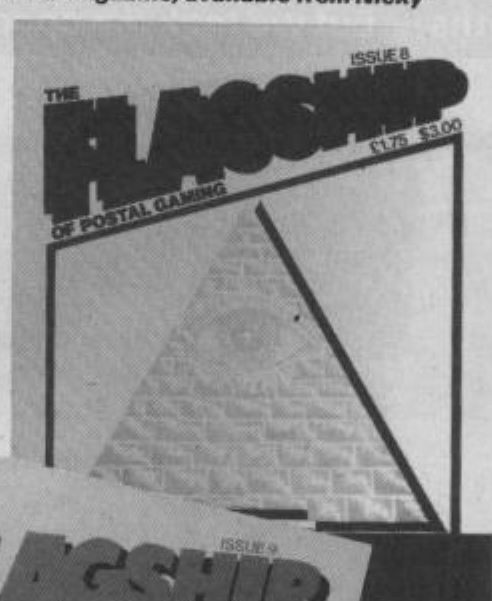


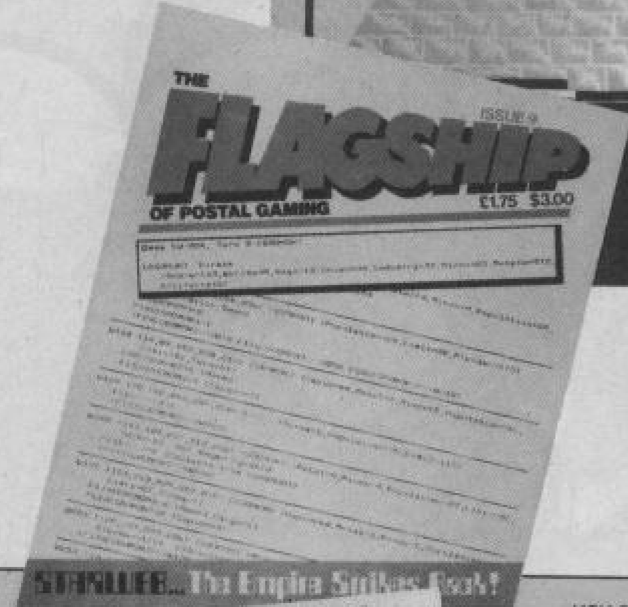






A selection of FLAGSHIP covers. The only professionally produced international Play By Mail Game magazine, available from Nicky Palmer who edits it at PO Box 12, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands WS9 OTJ. £1.75 buys a single copy packed with the latest information and hints on playing games by mail.







PLAY BY PHONE

Common use of modems is still a while off, I'm told, because of the simple fact that too few players have access to the necessary telephone lines, though Micronet 800 have moved into the area with *Starnet*, their play by modem game of space strategy, itself a version of Mike Singleton's *Starlord*. But British Telecom makes life less than easy for the networks, according to Nicky, though there are special cases for computer communication, such as taking part in American games. But for more information on this topic I'm directed to Ken Mulholland and his wife Carol at **Time Patterns**. Ken has managed to introduce artificial intelligence into the computer moderation of his games.

This is just the right time to speak with Ken. At the end of April, or thereabouts, he will launch a new modem game which sounds as ambitious as it is bizzare. The basic plot is that each player starts in a blue void and can make of it what he or she wishes. "You could become anything from a microbe in the bloodstream to the creator of a whole galaxy," he tells me. Your world has three connections to other nodes though, and so you have to create traps that will halt other empire builders who dare venture into your creation, while setting out on your own voyage of conquest. Central clearing will be done at Time Pattern's Birmingham base, but Ken hopes that all calls will be available at local rate, and though the time turnaround will be swifter, with synchronised weekly turns, the cost will be cheaper than average — approximately 75p to £1 a time. "There's nothing similar," Ken tells me and with a plot like that I can believe him.

FLAGSHIP

By now I'm in a daze with all the details of this hidden world of gamers. Actually being seen to be there has to be their main problem — even the traditional role players gather noisily in pubs at regular intervals, but if your opponents are spread from Lands End to John o' Groats, or maybe even abroad, that's not so easy. However if you want to find out more about the scene in general don't wait till next year's convention. Nicky Palmer has kindly agreed to make individual copies of the Flagship available to Crash readers at £1.75 — a useful introduction because they contain details of all the pbms available, plus articles that will give you a further flavour of the games themselves. And though they may not set the pulse racing as fast as a shoot'em up, they'll certainly reach parts way beyond the memory of a micro!

I stagger out of the hall into the chilly daylight of Islington, an evil grin on my face — an evil ambition in my mind. Shall I attempt nothing less than World Domination? The answer, inevitably, is in the post.

This is a list of all PBM companies mentioned in FLAGSHIP 1–9.

US

Advent Games, PO Box 81674, Lincoln, NE 68501
Adventures By Mail, PO Box 436, Cohoes, NY 12047
Adventures Design Group, PO Box 821072, Dallas, TX 75382
Adventure Systems, 1669 S. Voss, Suite FF-H, Houston, TX 77057
Arden Enterprises, Rt 4 Box 4506, New Philadelphia, OH 44663
Rick Barr, PO Box 1873, Cave Creek, AZ 85331
Clemens & Associates, PO Box 4529, San Clemente, CA 92672
C-Mind Enterprises, 1008 Tenth St no. 417, Sacramento, CA 95814
Comstar Enterprises, PO Box 601062, N. Miami Beach, FL 33160
C-T Simulations, Box 590273, Houston, TX 77259
ECI, 6923 Pleasant Dr, Charlotte, NC 282111
Fantastic Simulations, PO Box 24566, Denver, CO 80224
Flying Buffalo, PO Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252-1467
4 Sight, PO Box 1903, Indianapolis, IN 46206
Galactic Empires, PO Box 24297, Dayton, OH 45424
Game Systems Inc, PO Box 431166, Miami, FL 33243
Graaf Simulations, 27530 Harper, St Clair Shores, MI 48081
Intergalactic Games, PO Box 511279, Salt Lake City, Utah 84151
Jabberwock Enterprises, PO Box 158, Somers, CT 06071
JF&L, PO Box 550, Altoona, FL 32702
Kelstar Enterprises, PO Box 455, Zephyrhills, FL 34283
KSK Concepts, PO Box 375, Morris Plains, NJ 07950
KTH Games, 1408 Kentucky Ave, Fort Pierce, FL 33450
The Mailbox, PO Box 3219, Bethlehem, PA 18017
Midnight Games, PO Box 421356, Sacramento, CA 95842
Neolithic Enterprises, 350 North Lantana Suite 586, Camarillo, CA 93010
Palace Simulations, PO Box 743, Madison, NJ 07940
Pierce & Co., PBM PO Box 25675, Chicago, IL 60625
Quest Computer Services, PO Box 1300, Dahlgren, VA 22448
Reality Simulations, PO Box 27576, Tempe, AZ85282
Rhiannon Enterprises, PO Box 510, North Highlands, CA 95660
Schubel & Son, PO Box 214848, Sacramento, CA 95821
Software Doctors, PO Box 171, Graves End Station, Brooklyn, NY 11223
Superior Simulations, PO Box 505, Fairfield, ID 83327
Time Space Simulations, 5304 Crossfield Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23464
TL Designs, PO Box 98417, Lubbock, TX 79499
Vigard Simulations, PO Box 231, Orangevale, CA 95662
White Lion Enterprises, PO Box 188, Wood-ridge, NJ 07075
Mike Williams, Route 4, Box 802, La Follette, TN 37766
World Campaigns, PO Box 321, Epping, NH 03042
Constantine Xanthos, 120 MacDougal St, NY, NY 10012

UK

Balrog Adventures, 39 Chapman Ave, Maidstone, Kent ME15 8EJ
Conquest, The Firs, Wig Lane, Boxted, Nr. Colchester, Essex
Dave Cooksey, 2 Pemerton Rd, Basingstoke, Hants RG21 2LW
Mark Coulshed, Top Flat, 85 Gipsy Hill, London SE19 1QL
ICBM, PO Box 94, Bath St, Walsall, West Midlands
K.J.C. Games, 5 Vicarage Ave, Cleveleys, Lancs FY5 2BD
Lorewarden Games, 23 Breckhill Rd, Woodthorpe, Nottingham
Mitregames, 189 Balham High Road, London SW12
Orion Games, 6 St. Austell Rd, Manchester M16 8QW
Outbound Games, 2 Park Walk, Fareham, Hants PO15 6NQ
PBM Games, 45 Whitehouse Crescent, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV10 8HU
Rostherne Games, 102 Priory Rd, Milford Haven, Dyfed SA73 2ED
Sloth Enterprises, Freepost, PO Box 82, Southampton, Hants SO9 1BH
Spellbinder Games, 95 King St, Ramsgate, Kent
G. C. Squibb, 108 Teddington Park Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 8NE
Steel City Games, 44 Carwood Rd, Pitsmoor, Sheffield S4 7SD
Time Patterns, 97 Devonshire Rd, Birmingham B20 2PG
Vengeance Games, 6 Rose Farm Fold, Altofts, Normanton, W. Yorks
Vorcon Games, 59 Juniper, Birch Hill, Bracknell, Berks RG12 4ZG
Jonathan Woodall, "Hebron", Gorsty Knoll, Coleford, Gloucs

Australia

Chameleon Games, GPO Box 2302, Sydney 2001
Missing Tiger, GPO Box 286C, Hobart 7001, Tasmania
PBM Games, 60 Winona Rd, Mt Eliza 3930 (Ringquest)
Australian Wizard, GPO Box 356, Brisbane, Queensland 4001

Canada

Tundra Games, 109 The Country Way, Kitchener, ONT N2E 2K3

Since July last year, when Palace Software collected a s CRASH Smash for CAULDRON, the team working in the Scala Cinema have been busy laying plans for the future. Three launches are scheduled for 1986 — the first of which is a follow up to CAULDRON, by the name of CAULDRON II, THE PUMPKIN'S REVENGE. It's early days yet, with the Spectrum games not due for a good few months — but we took the opportunity of

POPPING INTO THE PALACE ART GALLERY

Cauldron II — The Pumpkin Strikes Back carries on from where *Cauldron* left off. Having defeated the evil Pumpking, seized the golden broomstick and became Witch-Queen, the Hag no longer lives in her dilapidated cottage but has moved to a huge castle at the edge of the forest. You play the part of a small pumpkin, who was in fact the Pumpking's guardian in *Cauldron*, and must recover the golden broomstick from the clutches of the oppressive Hag.

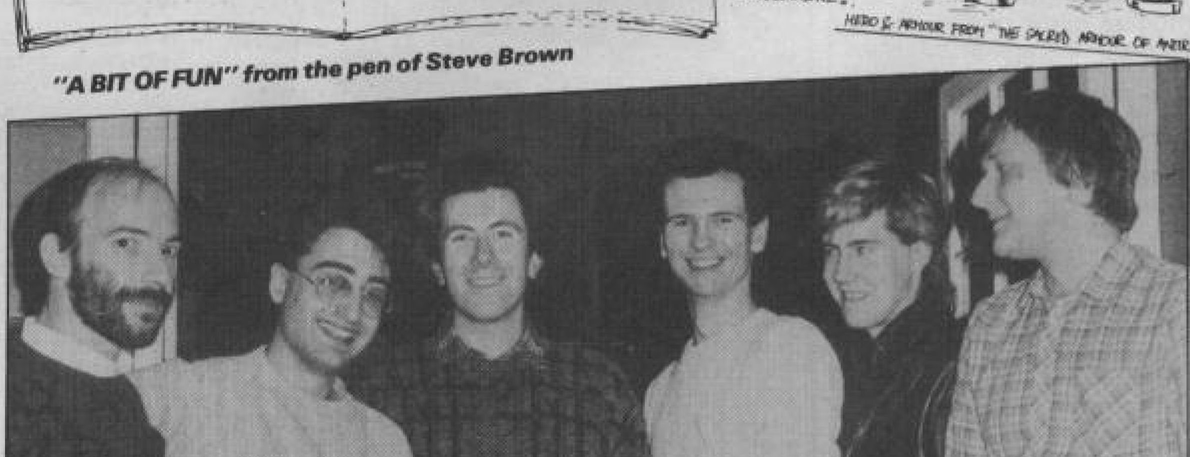
Work on the Commodore version is proceeding apace, and although the core of the game has been implemented on the Spectrum, the graphics and finished game are still a fair way off. A July launch is pencilled into the Palace diary. Once again, Steve Brown, the artist behind *Cauldron* is responsible for the graphics that appear in the game and the packaging artwork.

Steve joined Palace in late 1984 coming from a background in commercial illustration. Most of his work was for advertising agencies, although he has produced a few covers for **White Dwarf** by way of light relief. He came to art late in life, starting at art college in his mid twenties after spending a while doing a variety of things . . . now he's firmly settled with Palace, producing stylish graphics on the computer screen.



"A BIT OF FUN" from the pen of Steve Brown





The assemble crew from the Scala Cinema. Left to right we have Richard Joseph, Stanley Schembri, Steve Brown, Dan Malone, David Quinn and Richard Leinfellner. The monkeys on the roof are part of the decor in the auditorium of the picture palace above which Palace has its nest

The Sacred Armour of Antiriad is due for release after *Cauldron II*, and comic strip artist Dan Malone is the man taking care of the screen images on this project. Dan had never touched a computer until he started work for Palace Software last October, but has since designed a virtually complete storyboard for the game.

Pete Stone, the Big Cheese at Palace and co-founder of the company with Richard Leinfellner, decided that another artist was needed to take the pressure off Steve Brown if the company was to expand its portfolio of programming projects. George and Richard spent ages looking for the right person, interviewing lots of artists and they had almost given up hope when an art college lecturer who had heard of their search for a talented comic-book artist got in touch. She remembered that Dan had left his course at art college — he spent all his time sitting in the back of the class drawing comics — and recommended him for the job. Late last year Dan brought his portfolio to the Cinema and was hired immediately.

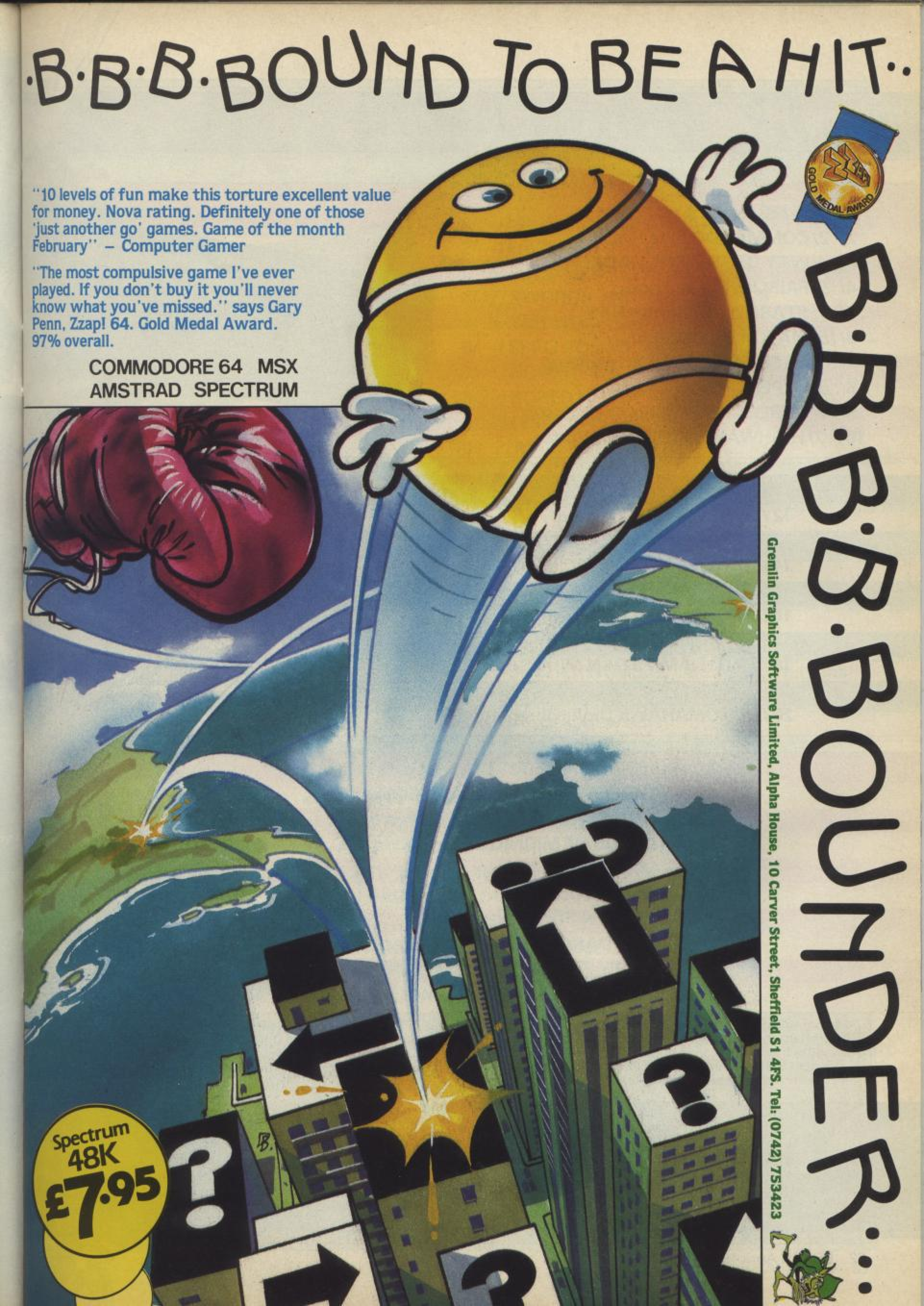
The Sacred Armour of Antiriad is set after the Holocaust in which humanity virtually exterminated itself. A few survivors went underground, regressed, and formed tribes worshipping the god Antiriad as personified by a humanoid form they hold sacred. However, the Elders of the tribes know the truth behind the legend — the great god Antiriad is nothing more than an Anti-Rad suit, used as protection against radioactive fallout during The War. At least the myth keeps their subjects happy.

Until **They** arrive, that is, and disrupt the social fabric. A group of aliens set up shop in a dead volcano, striking fear into the hearts of the savage humans and being generally unpleasant. Prayers to the god Antiriad achieve little, so the tribes turn to the Elders for advice. The Elders respond with the answer that the Sacred Armour of Antiriad is needed to repel the invaders.

A hero is chosen to recover the suit, penetrate the alien fortress and dispose of the threat. Which is where you will come in, around August time . . . .

Dan's talents for comic-book art have been applied to the design of the graphics, and his works should feature in the inlay — which will set the scene for the game in pictorial form.

Palace Software has a third release planned for launch in early September. At the moment this game hasn't got a title, but the programming team is to be BINARY VISION — a new company which has grown out of the Electronic Pencil company. Rupert Bowater and Paul Norris have left the EPC to set up on their own — the spilt is perfectly amicable, it's just that they wanted to follow their own direction. This has taken them towards Palace and work has commenced on "a tropical escapade set between the First and Second World Wars". Apart from that idiosyncratic (LM-LWD) verbal description, there was nothing for us to view in the Palace Gallery, so we left the artists and programmers busy with their work and returned Ludlowards. (You try it!)


·B·B·B·BOUND TO BE A HIT··
"10 levels of fun make this torture excellent value for money. Nova rating. Definitely one of those 'just another go' games. Game of the month February" – Computer Gamer
"The most compulsive game I've ever played. If you don't buy it you'll never know what you've missed." says Gary Penn, Zzap! 64. Gold Medal Award. 97% overall.
COMMODORE 64 MSX
AMSTRAD SPECTRUM
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B·B·B·B·BOUNDER··
Gremlin Graphics Software Limited, Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: (0742) 753423
Spectrum 48K £7·95

TOP 30 FOR APRIL

1 (*1)* **ELITE** Firebird
2 (*2)* **COMMANDO** Elite Systems
3 (*4)* **WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST** Melbourne
4 (*5)* **FAIRLIGHT** The Edge
5 (*3)* **STARQUAKE** Bubble Bus
6 *(15)* **MATCH DAY** Ocean
7 (*6)* **BACK TO SKOOL** Microsphere
8 (*8)* **HYPERSPORTS** Imagine
9 *(11)* **GYROSCOPE** Melbourne House
10 (*7)* **HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER** Vortex

11 *(13)* **SABOTEUR** Durell
12 *(10)* **SPY Vs SPY** Beyond
13 *(18)* **SPELLBOUND** Mastertronic
14 *(—)* **YIE AR KUNG FU** Imagine
15 *(17)* **ROBIN OF THE WOOD** Odin
16 *(29)* **GUNFRIGHT** Ultimate
17 *(—)* **TAU CETI** CRL
18 *(23)* **DYNAMITE DAN** Mirrorsoft
19 *(19)* **NIGHTSHADE** Ultimate
20 *(25)* **TOMAHAWK** Digital Integration

21 *(—)* **LORD OF THE RINGS** Melbourne House
22 *(—)* **THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE** Mikro-Gen
23 (*9)* **DOOMDARK'S REVENGE** Beyond
24 *(14)* **LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Beyond
25 *(—)* **MATCH POINT** Psion
26 *(—)* **RAMBO** Ocean
27 *(24)* **ENIGMA FORCE** Beyond
28 *(—)* **DUN DARACH** Gargoyle Games
29 *(—)* **DALEY THOMPSON's SUPERTEST** Ocean
30 *(16)* **MARSPORT** Gargoyle Games

Nothing very exciting has happened since last month in the top five places — the same games have shuffled round a bit, with **Firebird**'s ELITE remaining in the number one slot and **Elite**'s COMMANDO in the number two position. New games make new entries: from **Imagine** in the form of YIE AR KUNG FU, from **Melbourne House** with LORD OF THE RINGS, and **Mikro-Gen** arrive with THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE. **Ultimate** seem to have lost their grip on the chart — GUNFRIGHT represents them at number 16, continuing a gentle upward climb while NIGHTSHADE stays firmly at the nineteenth hole.



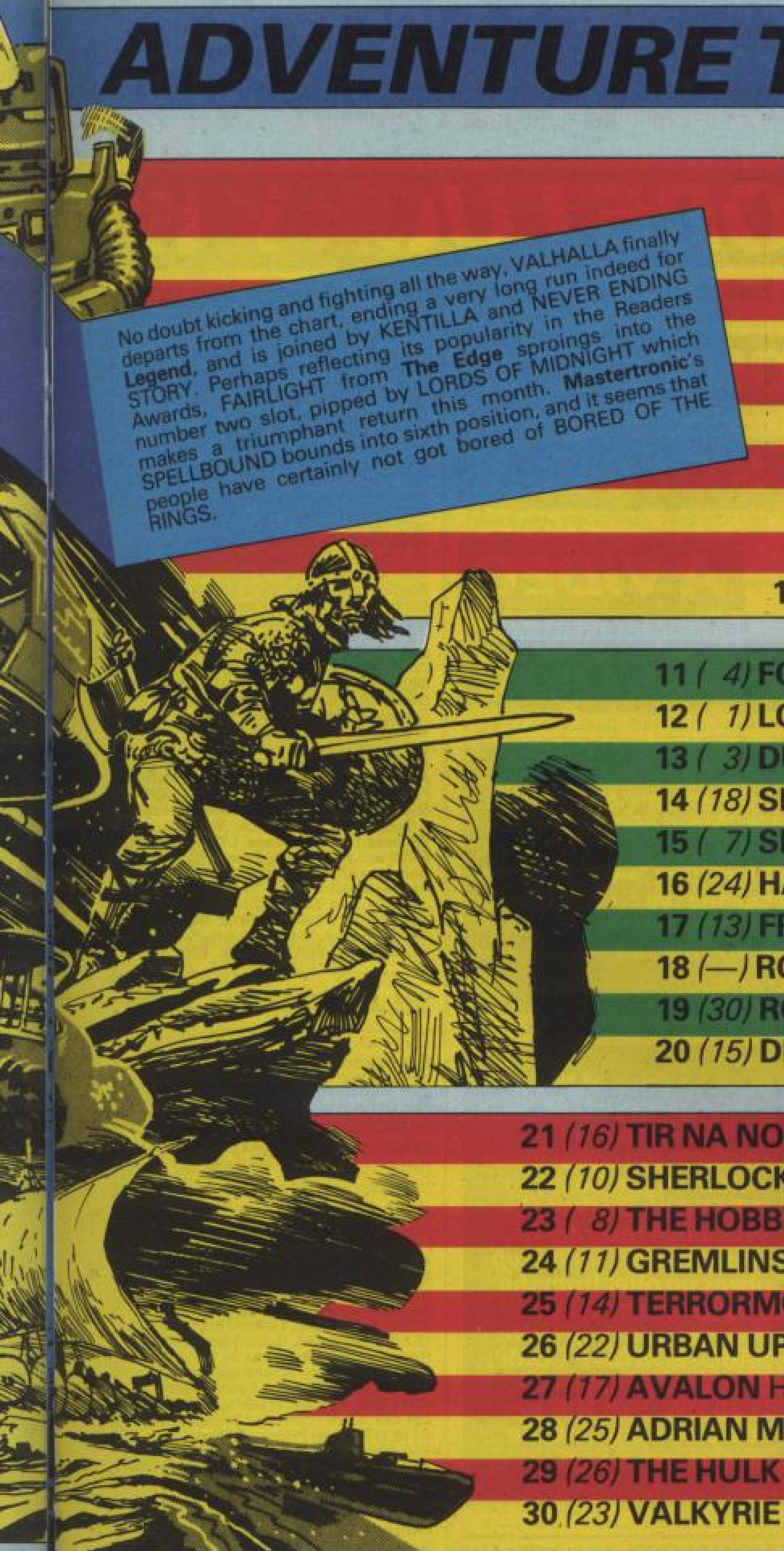
Forty pounds worth of software goes to **G B Crease** of Leigh on Sea in Essex this month, a nice easy win there eh? CRASH Hats and T Shirts will soon be on their way to the four runners up in the April Hotline Draw and they are: **David Alexander** from Hampton in Middlesex; **Julian Lewis** who hails from Wilford in Nottingham; **Jonathan Mortlock** of Lichfield in Staffordshire and **Rob Pettifer**, person of the parish of Rugby in Warwickshire. Your name could appear here next month, dear reader!

The CRASH HOTLINE AND ADVENTURE CHART is Britain's most important popularity chart — for Spectrum Software, at least. The chart depends entirely on your support and we need your votes in order to produce the analysis of who's playing what.

Nowadays, there's only ONE WAY to submit your votes — and that's by post. Towards the back of the magazine, lurking very close to the competition results bit, you'll find a couple of coupons that you can use to send us your votes. If you're really unkeen on cutting up your magazine, you could always use a photocopy, or copy out the details on the forms onto a plain piece of paper.

Whatever you do, get those voting forms in. Every month we draw out a total of ten winning forms after the charts

ADVENTURE TOP 30 CHART



No doubt kicking and fighting all the way, VALHALLA finally departs from the chart, ending a very long run indeed for **Legend**, and is joined by KENTILLA and NEVER ENDING STORY. Perhaps reflecting its popularity in the Readers Awards, FAIRLIGHT from **The Edge** sproings into the number two slot, pipped by LORDS OF MIDNIGHT which makes a triumphant return this month. **Mastertronic**'s SPELLBOUND bounds into sixth position, and it seems that people have certainly not got bored of BORED OF THE RINGS.

1 *(—)* **LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Beyond
2 *(—)* **FAIRLIGHT** The Edge
3 *(9)* **LORD OF THE RINGS** Melbourne House
4 *(12)* **SWORDS AND SORCERY** PSS
5 *(6)* **RED MOON** Level 9
6 *(—)* **SPELLBOUND** Mastertronic
7 *(5)* **DOOMDARK'S REVENGE** Beyond
8 *(20)* **BORED OF THE RINGS** Silversoft
9 *(28)* **ENIGMA FORCE** Beyond
10 *(2)* **MARSPORT** Gargoyle Games

11 *(4)* **FOURTH PROTOCOL** Century
12 *(1)* **LORDS OF TIME** Level 9
13 *(3)* **DUN DARACH** Gargoyle Games
14 *(18)* **SPIDERMAN** Adventure International
15 *(7)* **SHADOWFIRE** Beyond
16 *(24)* **HAMPSTEAD** Melbourne House
17 *(13)* **FRANKIE** Ocean
18 *(—)* **ROBIN OF SHERWOOD** Adventure International
19 *(30)* **ROBIN O' THE WOOD** Odin
20 *(15)* **DRAGONTORC** Hewsons

21 *(16)* **TIR NA NOG** Gargoyle Games
22 *(10)* **SHERLOCK** Melbourne House
23 *(8)* **THE HOBBIT** Melbourne House
24 *(11)* **GREMLINS** Adventure International
25 *(14)* **TERRORMOLINOS** Melbourne House
26 *(22)* **URBAN UPSTART** Richard Shepherd
27 *(17)* **AVALON** Hewsons
28 *(25)* **ADRIAN MOLE** Level9/Mozaic
29 *(26)* **THE HULK** Adventure International
30 *(23)* **VALKYRIE 17** The RamJam Corporation

Darren Lee is this month's lucky winner of the £40 worth of software for the Adventure chart — Aggie will be in touch soon, Darren. Four more people came second, all winning a CRASH Hat and T Shirt — here's their names . . . **Chris Geggus** from Romford in Essex; **Andrew Matthews** of Crofton Park in London; **R Davidson** a Brummie from West Heath and **Richard Orpin** a Great Missenden man.

have been compiled, five for each chart, and prizes go whizzing off to the lucky senders of those forms. The first form out of the sack of Hotline votes, like the first one to come out of the Adventure voting box, wins its sender £40 worth of software of his or her choice. And a CRASH T Shirt, of course.

The next four voting slips for each chart, that's eight voters in all, win a T Shirt and Cap. Don't miss out on your chance to win all these goodies for the cost of a 17p stamp and the time it takes to put pen and your opinions to paper. CRASH HOTLINE and CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL are what we call the giant boxes that your votes go into, and they can be reached via PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.



MORE AND MORE LUCKY WI

Another dose of names and addresses belonging to lucky competition winning types

YOU COULD STILL WIN A VIDEO RECORDER!



Courtesy of the CRASH OOPS! Department, a bijou problemette cropped up in the February Edition with the typesetting on DURELL's Win a Video Competition. We've had a good run of entries so far, but all was not made clear in the blurb that went with the competition — we didn't get all the typesetting out of the machine and, the bit that we missed explained the prizes. Here are the words we missed out of the February Issue . . .

Nicest map received by then will win its creator the video recorder and the next ten mappers in line of excellence will be rewarded with a runner up prize. Now pay close attention. If you win a runner up prize you can have a copy of *Combat Lynx* OR a copy of *Turbo Esprit* OR a copy of *Critical Mass* OR (and this is the last OR I'm putting in) OR a copy of *Harrier Attack* AND a copy of *Scuba Dive*. So make sure you write your choice of prizelet on the entry form which should accompany your map as well as your name, address and T Shirt size.

In recognition of the mistake on our part, we've decided to continue the competition a little longer. So if you still fancy a crack at the VHS video recorder or one of the ten runner up prizes on offer from the nice people at Durell, then get you maps in to SABOTEUR MAP COMP, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SY8 1DB to arrive by April 25th. Be quick, now . . .

MASTERTRONIC MAD DAY OUT

This month's results page should be adorned with a cartoon strip provided by Tim Carson by way of his entry in the Mastertronic MAD DAY OUT competition we ran a in the February Edition. Well done Tim, of Monkhide HR8 2TX. Mastertronics Minions will no doubt be in touch very shortly to whisk you off for a day you'll remember!

ALLIGATA'S MATCH FISHING

As we mantioned last ish, the Overall Winner for this comp run in Spetember/October last year was N Palmer who should by now have received his notification and may well already be on his adventure holiday as you read this. Lucky fellow. Second Prize went to Gavin Wilding who's probably out fishing by now.

Runners Up in this competition are due for their personal copies of the Jack Charlton's Match Fishing Board Game — but it won't be ready until July time. So the nice Mr Palmer at ALLIGATA will be sending you lot a copy of a new Alligata game to be going on with, while you wait for your real prize to be made. Nice, isn't he?

Wayne Keegan, Wigan Rd, WG7 5HQ; Eve C West, Summer Hill, LA19 5UA; Stuart Yates, Kelburne Rd, OX3 3SH; Stephen Geraghty, Whitefriars Drive, HA3 5HW; Steven Horn, Kilminston Close, PO14JL; N Wolstencroft, Riverside, OL1 2TX; Neil Morris, Sunnyside Road, DT4 9BJ; John Tobin, Pinkston Drive, G21 1PE; David Edwards, Chevening Road, TN13 2RZ; N Green, Glenview Rd, HP1 1TB; Johnathan Reeves, Quarry Hollow, OX3 8JR; Mrs MJ Dunn, Carberry Rd, LS6 1QQ; Shaun Fletcher, Raskelf Avenue, TS19 9BG; Jamie Macintosh, Drumbeg Loan, G63 9LG; Paul Watford, Richmond Way, MK16 0LQ; Christopher Turner, Whitbourne Avenue, SN3 5PZ; Colin Dawson, Milford Close, B97 5PZ; Jamie Brammer, Wynyard Rd, S6 4GB; Mark Hudson, Princess Rd, S18 6LX; Stuart Campbell, Whitefield Square, L32 0UT; Paul Whittaker, The Hayne, LE15 6JB; Scott Farrow, Cherry Park, PL7 3PF; Christopher Jupp, Birch Tree Ave, BR4 9EQ; Damian Knight, Riverside, OL1 2TX; Libby Wells, St Christopher Drive, LS29 0RJ; B Gregorick, Station Rd, NG23 6QF; Tony Mason, Norland Ave, HU4 7RB; MR South, Karen Drive, BS19 3JT; Mathew Bannerman, Crescent Place, SY1 1TQ; Darren Hedgeland, Alexandra Gardens, SM5 4LJ; MA Smith, Pinewood Ave, WF2 9JR; Ian Clayton, Portreath Drive, DE3 2SB; Christopher Brussell, Ladycroft Paddock, DE3 2GA; Michael Washer, Sir William Close, NR11 6AP; Paul Scholte, Ivatt Glascoe Heath, B77 2HQ; James Hortobagli, Selsey Rd, TN22 5EB; 13 Year Old CRASH reader, The Tolmans, CR2 6ND; Andrew Foster, Meadow Rd, CW8 3BS; Alan Waldron, Harburn Drive, EH55 8AR; Fiona Purdie, Muirhouse Park, EH4 4RR; Nicholas Hasler, Brunwin Lane, CM7 5BU; A Gray, Bathurst, LN5 9LA; Mark Wilkinson, Longton Lane, L35 6NU; Robert Finlayson, Brentwood Drive, G53 7UJ; S Galloway, Castle Bytham, NG33 4SP; Andrew Salako, Farley Nursery, TN16 1RR; Jason Norton, Beadel Close, CM8 1PG; James Johnson, Westella Rd, HU10 7QS; Graham Leech, Moor Park Ave, CA2 7LZ; Justin Ashby, Wayford Close, WA6 7QB

GLADIATOR COMP

Overall Winner of the Gladiator Competition arranged with DOMARK in February was **Paul Barratt** of Queen St, S65 2SR. He collects a very neat piece of original artwork. A bunch of runners up also collect a nifty "Domarked for Life" T Shirt of their very own. Here are their names:

Stephen Hoad, Lancaster Drive, RH19 3SU; Martin Jenkins, Walton Rd, KT8 0HZ; Marcus Phokou, Methuen Park, NW10 2JS; Kevin Dennington, Middlethorpe Grove, YO2 2LE; MJ Beck, Tapton Park Road, S10 3FJ; Adrian Youell, Gablefields, Essex; Brian Mowatt, Kinghorne St, DD11 2LZ; Craig Duckworth, Wheathead Crescent, BO22 6LX; Paul Davies, Lydstep Grove, CV31 1NS; Spencer Wakeman, Mill Hill Rd, L61 4XF; Chris Houston, Christchurch Rd, KT18 7TR; Arran Pritchard, Mount Pleasent, Gwynedd; Peter Duke, Green Lane, PO3 5EY; Antonio Candeias, 23-2600 Vila Francade, Xira, Portugal; NM Robinson, Marks Rd, RM7 7AF; EB Bennet, Northcote Rd SW11; Jeremy Kessler, Huntsmead, Hampshire; Simon Thrupp, Tudor Hill, B73 6BD; Paul Tucker, Cheshire Gardens, LE2 8HD; M Durrance, Martindale Ave, GU15 1BB

PSS SWORDS AND SORCERY COMPETITION

The last set of results from the Christmas Special Comps, and boy, did it take some judging! It's clear you lot were very keen to win the Laser Disc game. The lucky winner was **Steven C Jarret**, of Ashtree Rd, B69 2HD, and no, you can't all go round to his house for a go. Well done Steve, and now for the runners





NERS . .

up, who each collect a PSS Goodie Bag as a reward for their moster designs. Jolly good stuff eh?

Jim Grimulord, Prince Regent Lane, E16 3JL; Mr G Taylor, California Rd, BS15 6PP; Elout de Kok, 7907 6E Hoogeveen, Holland; Stephen Green, Grove Hill, ilts, SN6 7JN; Stephen J Flight, Honley Rd, SE6 2JB; Paul Keller, Edith Avenue, PL4 8TH; Dave Als, Flackley Ash, TN31 6TB; Karl Rowe, Marlborough Rd, DY3 1BR; Steven Lyttle, Lords St, Belfast, BT5 4QG; , Barry Coates, Elson, Shropshire; Andrew Murray, Hillside View, AB3 6PD; Richard Maddock, Wayside, TQ5 8PY; Paul Brennon, Fladbury Crescent, B29 6PL; Geoff Winkles, Harold Rd, MK45 4QH; Craig Groundsell, Waverton Way, NE23 6PF; Ian McAuliffe, West Common Grove, AL5 2LL; Robert Hunter, High St, NG32 1JB; John Firth, Hollins Rd, OL8 4SR; A Whitehurst, Dodthorpe, HU6 9HA; J Gavin, Stanhope St, WA10 2BT; Alan George, Dawson Avenue, NE26 3SY; SJ Richmond, Kelvin Close, CB1 4DN; Philip Bonner, Glapton Lane, NG11 8NB; Ian Wheeler, Wellington St, PO5 4HT; Mark Sibson, Teall Court, W Yorks

XCEL COMPETITION

Some little while back we asked you to come up with a painting, drawing or photograph of an alien space craft. Lots and lots of you did, and we picked the best hundred out of the giant card-board box. These people should by now have received their complimentary copies of *XCEL*. Well done!

Alun George, Whitley Bay, NE26 3SY; C Yau, London, NW1 7RX; Ian Harris, Wolverhampton, WV6 7NR; Shane Cagney, Laurleen, Co Dublin, Republic of Ireland; Ian Terry, Barn Mead, CM18 65P; , David Alfred Lee, Beaumaris, LLS8 8HF; Ben Devereau, Worley Road, AL3 5NS; C Cousins, Bishopsthorpe, GU35 8JW; Tom Buchanan, North Oldmoss, AB5 8NA; Bryan Scott, Beech Grove, NE9 7RD; Robert Norton, Goodyear Avenue, WV10 9JR; Neil Mowberry, Marcus Road, ABJ OSF; M Faulkner, Dandora Road, CV2 2FU; Jared Smith, Wilton Bank, TS12 1PD; Neil Clarkson, Dowding Way, SN12 6SQ; Keith Gratton, The 'Rowens', LE17 6AU; Peter Rayner, Doggett Road, CB1 4LF; Paul Beards, Newbold Road, CV21 2NQ; Steven Jacob, Bevil Court, EN11 9LX; Richard Johns, Whitchurch Lane, HA8 6QL; R J Baillie, St Swithins Road, DT6 5DS; C P Hampton, Southall Avenue, WE3 7LS; Graeme Carrott, Granville Road, NE3 5LD; Anthony Downs, Barn Common, ST20 OLD; Stuart Stenton, Colsnavr, Scotland; Jonathan Bass, Weldon, CM3 4DZ; Andrew Young, Loddon Close, OX14 3TB; Jason Gall, 'Alwyn' Burgh Road, NR31 9EG; S Lewington, Woodbine Cottage, GL6 8EP; Gary Bennetton, Brewers lane, PO13 OJX; Kevin MacNeil, Macleod road, Scotland; Glaudio Soave, Great Cambridge Road, EN8 9EX; Daniel James, Whytings , Sussex; Mr F Wedge, Newhall Street, WS11 1AD; Stephen E Griffith, Mersey Avenue, L19 3AU; Stephen Anderson , Highter's Close, B14 4NN; Alan Walton, Peel Close, BBZ 3NG; Kieran Butler, Elm Grove, Co Dublin; Gary Begg, Fountain Square, KW1 5SX; Ian King, Foxyard Road, DY4 8BH; Jason Guth, Chigwell Lane, IG10 3NY; Russell Winstanley, Twenty Acres Road, BS10 6PP; David Drane, The Fairway, HA4 OSH; Ian Bentley, Allerton Close, BB3 OHJ; Stephen Deary, Wynn Gardens, NE10 OYN; M Hook, Rocky Lane, B61 9HP; Paul Wood, Rosedale Gardens, RM9 4EA; Jonathan Kobarenko, Baildon Road, DN15 8DE; Gregory Fisk, Four Winds, TA20 1LL; Neil Taylor, Kirkway, Hull; Gary Hewitt, Beaulieu Gardens, GU17 OLB; John Wilson, Windsor Crescent, PA5 9QU; Alan Thomas, Woodgate Road, GL16 7QQ; Stephen Martin, Munster Gardens, N13 5PT; Anon, Highsheldon, LONDON N6; Jason Robinson, Wortham Way, Stevenage ; Stephen Found, St Anne's Drive, BS15 6RD; Matthew Woods, Combs Close, SK12 3ED; J W Todd Jnr, Carlton hill, NG4 1FN; David Crozier, Rowley Crescent, DH5 9QY; Timothy Grace, Druids Cross Gardens, L18 3EB; A Goddard, Robert's Avenue, ST5 9ES; Paul Smith, Glenville Avenue, LE2 9JF; Andrew Fitzsimmons, Marford Hill, LL12 85W; Toby Cartwright, Orchard Close, EX17 4NF; Steven Kendrick, Alfred Road, L43 4TU; D M Shannon, Moyola Park, BT36 8ER; G L Bird, Ducketts Mead, CM19 5EG; Linton Simms, Beddington Lane, CR0 4TH; Steven Vickers, Woodstock Road, SM5 3DZ; The Occupier, Cobmead, AL10 OJF; John Nash, Elmdale Grove, SO5 OAX; Matthew Walker, Kingswood Drive, WS6 6NX; Jonathan Schorah, Gascoigne Avenue, LS15 4LW; Richard Taylor, Laleham Road, TW17 OJS; Neil Suffield, Mickle Home Drive, DE13 7AT; Philip Parkes, Priestlands Park Road, DA15 7HR; Lee Reveley, The Hiron, CV3 6HT; A Smales, Old Mill Close, YO4 3DU; Wayne Birch, White Cottage, LN7 6NP; M Criddle, Heath House, DA5 2BW; Tim Clarke, Highfield Avenue, CB4 2AL; Alex Muir, Owen Avenue, G75 9AQ; Steven Moore, Greengate, LA8 8NF; Stephen Nolan, Hahnemann Road, L4 3SA; William Belfield, Julian Road, NG2 5AN; Sam Harris, Rayleigh Road, SW19 3RE; George Warwick, Vyrnwy Road, SY111 1NT; Marike Hilarius, LangeVoort 105, 23G3 CC Oegstgeest, Netherlands; Andrew McMenamin, Boythorpe Road, S40 2NB; Robert Hughes, Warwick Avenue, CV5 6DJ; Michael Slater, Wood Top, BLO 9EN; Linda Kingsford, Cavendish Drive, NN3 3HL; John Adams, Clapham Road, L4 2TQ; Alan Hubbard, Old Barn Way, BN4 4NS; Paul Redington, Martin Grove, SM4 5AJ; Richard Rayner, Tranby Avenue, YO1 3JN; Patrick Hartley, Crescent Walk, WF13 3BG; Daniel Warren, Selden Road, BS14 8PS; S Arnall, Dial House Lane, CV5 7LP

WEST BANK BADDIES

A mean bunch of dudes arrived in the post as a result of the appeal put out on behalf of Gremlin Graphics in their *West Bank* competition. The following artistic types win themselves a sweatshirt each for their trouble.

J. Morgan, Hampton Rd, SY11 1SN; J Khalid, Gladstone Park Gardens, NW2 6LA; SP Hoad, Lancaster Drive, RH19 3JU; Darren Porter, Bridgewater Rd, NN13 6BY; Robert Lockton, Sedgemoor Close, Bristol; Iain Humber, Greenhill Rd, NG4 1DF; Zion Burchell, Blackfold Rd, RH10 6LE; Gavin Mann, Beauley Crescent, DD3 0DH; Kevin Curtin, Elmgrove, IV12 4SN; Martin Wakeley, Orson Leys, CV22 5RF; RD Wright, Hall Rd, DE13 9BX; Martin Hill, Middle St, GL5 1DZ; Kye Watson, Luddlow Rd, DY10 1NW; Spencer Ellis, Ferndale Rd, EN3 6DH; Ray Tidmarsh, Pembroke Av, LE7 8BZ; Jason Osborne, Hillbury Rd, CR3 9TGT; Brett Collier, Pembar Av, London, E17 6HN; R Jones, Rhayder, LD6 5AT; Steven Smith, Swanborugh Place, BN2 5QB; Nicholas Derrick, Chichester Close, SO5 0EY; Richard Butterfield, Gold St, S70 1TU; Ben Devereau, Worley Rd, AL3 5NS; Adrian Marshall, Aspen Av, MK41 8BX; Anthony Smales, Old Mill Close, YO4 3DU; Nigel J Palmer, Glenalmond, NR4 6AG

ADVENTURE CHART WRITE-IN COUPON

Please use block capitals and write clearly!

Name ....

Address ....

....

postcode **T SHIRT SIZE** ....

Send your coupon to: **CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

My top five programs are:

TITLE	VOTE OUT OF TEN
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

CRASH HOTLINE WRITE IN COUPON

Please use block capitals and write clearly!

Name ....

Address ....

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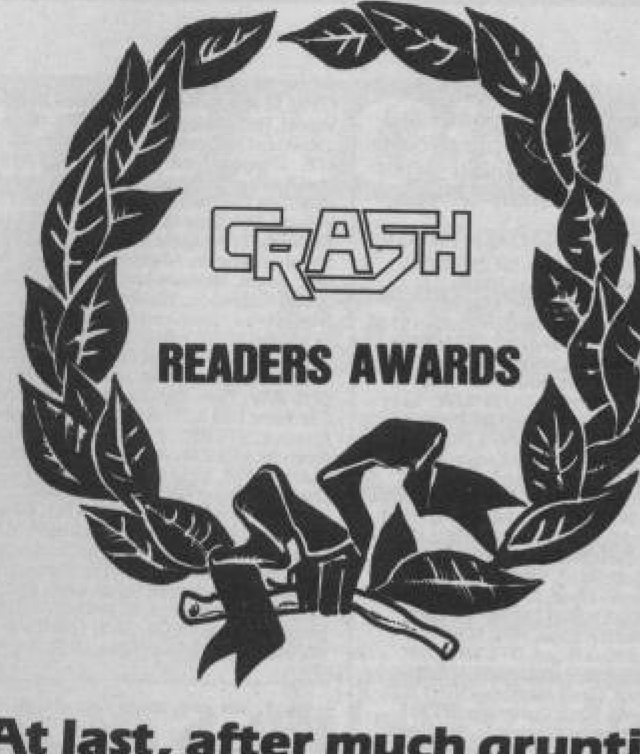
Postcode ....

Send your coupon to: **CRASH HOTLINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

My top five favourite programs in descending order are:

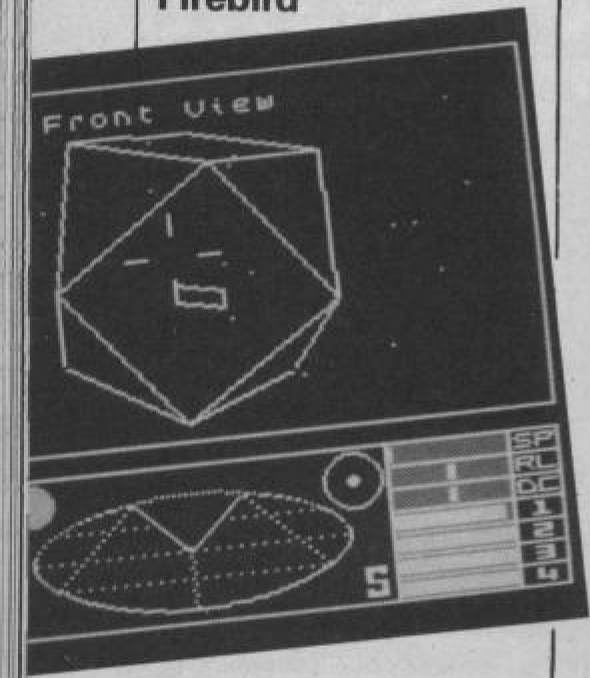
TITLE	PRODUCER
1	
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THE 1985 CRASH R

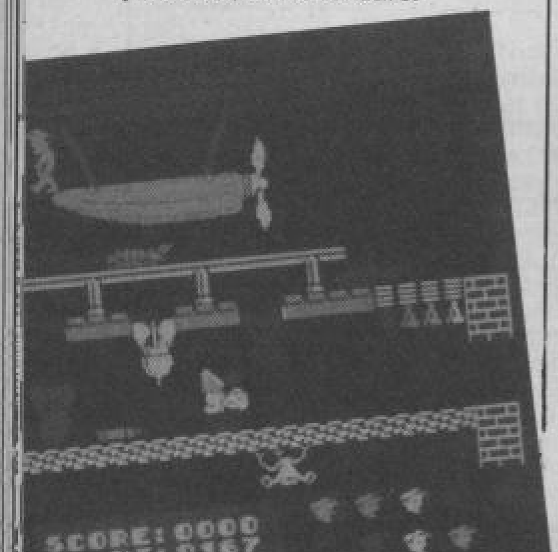


BEST GAME OVERALL

ELITE
Firebird



Lenslok can't have made that many enemies for ELITE to come tops in this supreme category. Melbourne House came a respectable second with EXPLODING FIST and Steve Crow's one-man game STARQUAKE published by Bubble Bus third, trailing FIST by one percentage point. You don't have to be big to be beautiful in the eyes of CRASH readers, that's for sure.



BEST PLATFORM GAME

DYNAMITE DAN
Mirrorsoft

An easy win in the platform category for DYNAMITE DAN from Mirrorsoft, which collected nearly a third of all the votes cast for Best Platform Games. MONTY ON THE RUN legged it into second place, while old Charlie Fotheringham-Grunes pottered shakily into third place clutching a handful of alchiems from NODES OF YESOD.

At last, after much grunting and groaning, our Database Minion has keyed in all your votes and come up with a full blown analysis of how the votes were cast in the 1985 Awards Poll. Here's a summary of all the statistical evidence we gathered.

We've gone through the categories in the same order as they appeared on the voting form, so pin your eyes back or whatever it is you're supposed to do, and absorb the information we have for you.

BEST SHOOT EM UP

COMMANDO
Elite Systems

The only really warlike game to enter into the running in this group came out tops! COMMANDO drew nearly twice as many votes as second-place MOONCRESTA from Incentive, and perhaps a little surprisingly, ELITE from Firebird game in third place. Who says you can't do a bit of trading in between battles?



BEST ARCADE ADVENTURE

FAIRLIGHT
The Edge

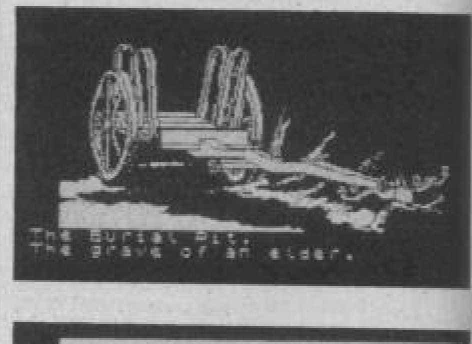
Bo Jangeborg, the programmer, and The Edge, the publishers will be well pleased when they learn their 3D game has achieved this piece of fame. Steve Crow fans put STARQUAKE from Bubble Bus into second place, while MARSPORT from Gargoyle Games beat DRAGONTORC from Hewson's into third place by two votes.

BEST TEXT-ONLY ADVENTURE

MORDON'S QUEST
Melbourne House

Almost a Melbourne In-House fight in this section of the awards. MORDON's QUEST came top, HAMPSTEAD came second but BORED OF THE RINGS by Fergus McNeill managed to prevent MH from spending the rest of 1986 bursting with joy. Silversoft's game came third.

BEST GRAPHICAL ADVENTURE

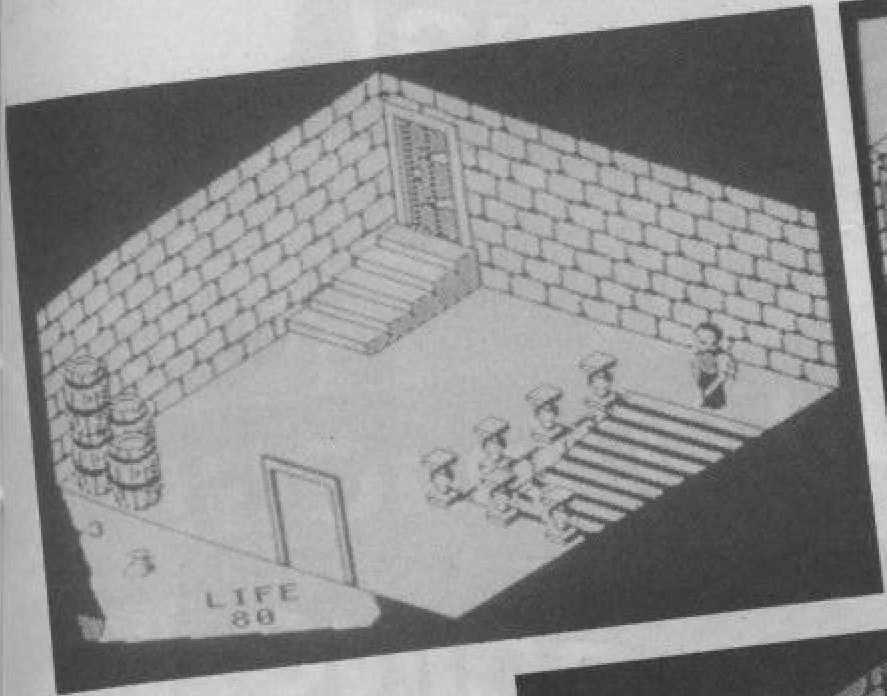


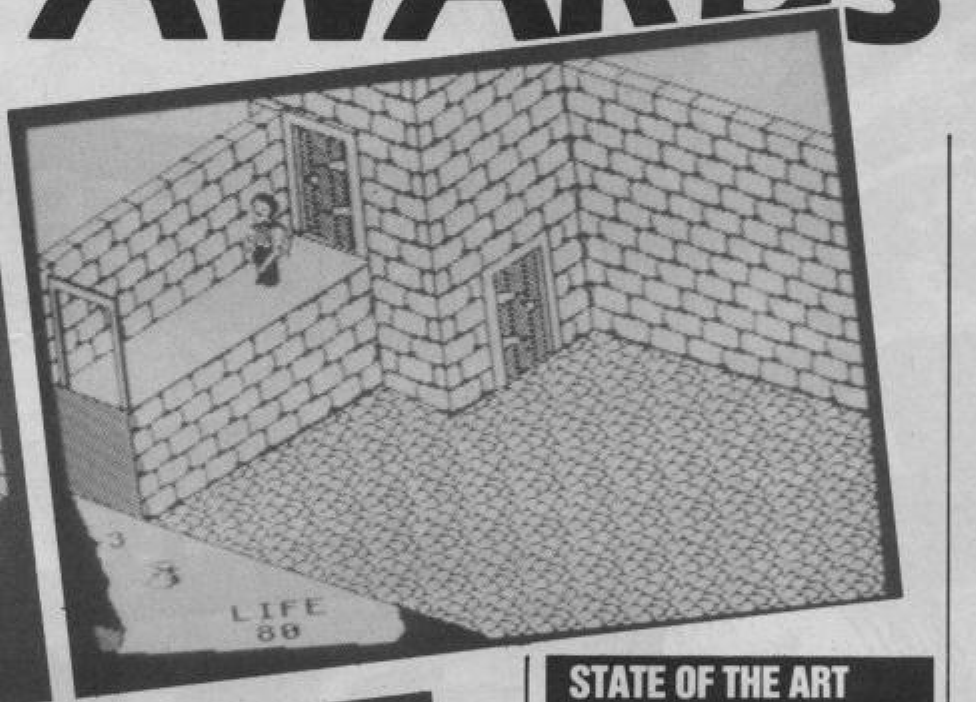


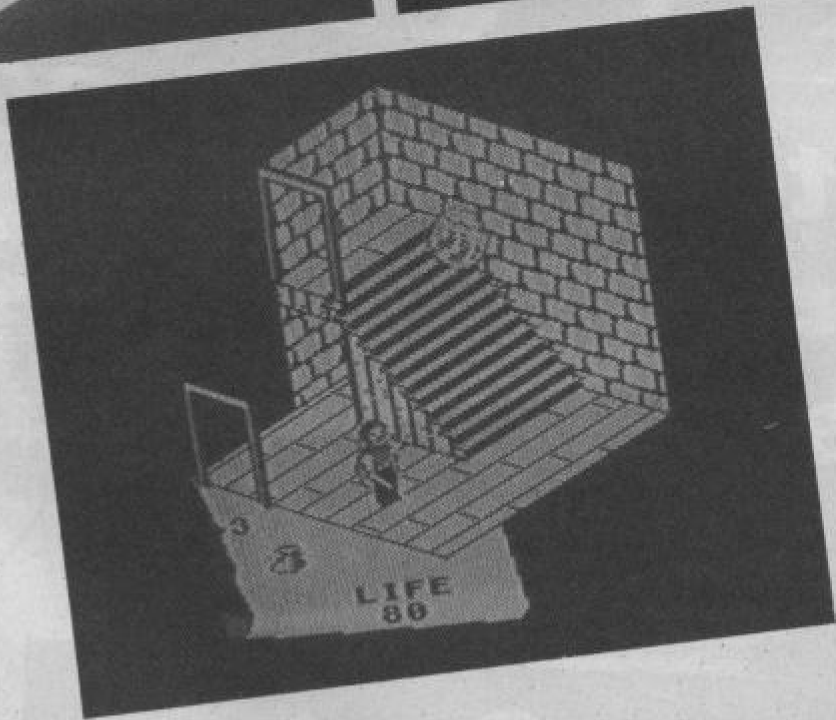
RED MOON
Level 9

A close run contest once again, with Level 9 elbowing Beyond's DOOMDARK'S REVENGE into second place. GREMLINS, from the now-defunct Adventure International slithered into third place — good job no-one fed them!

READERS AWARDS







BEST FLIGHT SIMULATION

TOMAHAWK
Digital Integration

You don't mess about with someone flying in a Tomahawk helicopter. Even if you're ELITE from Firebird or DAMBUSTERS from US Gold you agree to come second equal to Digital Integration's latest release. TOMAHAWK collected as many votes as ELITE and DAMBUSTERS put together. No contest.

BEST SPORTS SIMULATION

HYPERSPORTS
Imagine

A nice solid lead for HYPERSPORTS with EXPLODING FIST leaving a good gap and falling into second place. Oldie but goldie MATCH DAY from Ocean couldn't resist coming third. So there.

BEST WARGAME

ARNHEM
CCS

ARNHEM battled its way into the lead, fighting off a challenge from Elite's COMMANDO, oddly enough. BATTLE OF THE BULGE from MC Lothlorien put up valiant resistance but had to retreat into third place.

BEST GRAPHICS

FAIRLIGHT
The Edge

Bo and The Edge will be pleased! Coming Top twice is not a bad achievement! FAIRLIGHT was chased by ROBIN O' THE WOOD from Odin and Melbourne House's EXPLODING FIST. ROBIN won second place by one vote. Almost a photo-finish!

BEST SOUND FX

STARQUAKE
Bubble Bus

Steve Crow will soon have an award to put on his mantelpiece, for just beating Mirrorsoft's Rod Bowkett and DYNAMITE DAN into top slot in this category. A mere three votes settled the tussle for first and second place. EXPLODING FIST from Melbourne House trailing behind just a tiny bit, arriving in third place

BEST MUSIC

FAIRLIGHT
The Edge

Gosharootie! They've come top for the third time. What a team Bo and The Edge make! Worldmaker? More like World-dominator if you ask this Minion. Melbourne House's GYROSCOPE came a respectable second and Mirrorsoft's Musician programmer Rod Bowkett slotted DYNAMITE DAN into third place.

TACKIEST GAME OF THE YEAR

THE GREAT SPACE RACE
Legend

Should we allow this one? Oh alright then — Foregone Conclusion and all. Anirog's FLIGHT PATH 737 managed to take off and land in second place while SUPERGRAN from Tynesoft got on her bike and arrived third.

STATE OF THE ART AWARD

FAIRLIGHT
The Edge

WOW! They've cleaned up this year. The Edge'll have to move to new premises to make sure they've got enough room on their office walls for all the awards they've won from CRASH readers this year. Well done! ELITE from Firebird traded a few places and came second, State-of-the-Artwise. In third place, Denton Designs make their only appearance in this year's awards list with SHADOWFIRE.

It's all over for another year: our Database Minion can go back to sleep until it's time to start filling Apricots (computers you sillies) with the CRASHTIONNAIRE results. Thanks to everyone for getting out pens, scratching brains and sending in voting forms.

All that's left to do is organise the awards and make sure they're sent off to the rightful new owners. Ho hum . . . . WAIT A MINUTE! We promised to draw fifteen voting forms out of the sack and give away some prizes didn't we? Yes we did. No less than fifteen winners deserve their £15-worth of software and a T Shirt to wear on the beach this summer. Well, here's the names:
Brian Neilson, Mull, ML6 8DW; C Yau, Delancey Street, NW1 7RX; Michael Kilner, Heathcote Avenue, AL10 0RH; Donald Findlay, Mansionhouse Rd, EH19 2TZ; Philip Gosden, Watersplash Rd, TW17 0EB; Louis Clement, Upper Ham Rd, TW10 5LA; Bruce Oorall, Owlsmoor Rd, GU15 4SD; Alexander Hawkins, Aberdare Gardens, NW6 3QA; Andrew Stocker, Farm Close, PR9 7QB; Jamie Alsamarraie, Scarisbrick Crescent, L11 7DL; Jason Symonds, Romsley Rd, SO5 0ED; Andrew John Palmer, Pen Ardd, Mill Rd, LL33 0TP; Kent Jacobsen, Lundgardsparken, DENMARK; Steve Richardson, Pigot Orchard, HP22 4BP; Toby Blake, Holm Park, IV2 4XT

SCAMPER, BOING!

BOING! (Snatch) BOInnGG!

(Snatch) BOING, BOING,

(Snatch, Snatch,

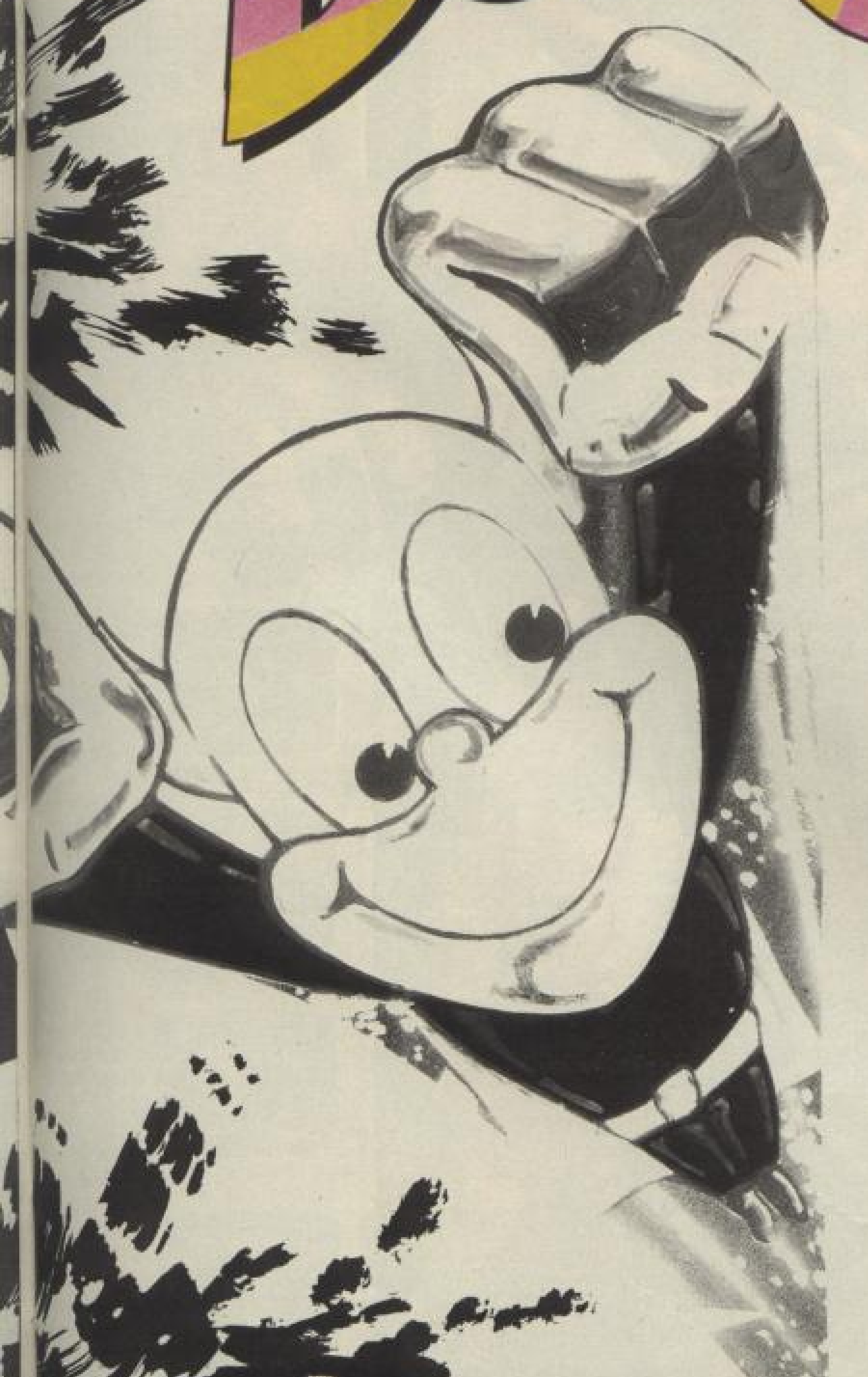
Snatch, Snatch)



Win a Bombjack Arcade Machine to keep for ever and ever

Elite T Shirts for 20 runners up

BOMBJACK



It's not easy being a superhero, or a Competition Minion for that matter. They make you sproing all round the shop gathering things up and generally making the place tidy. At least us minions don't have to collect bombs — only grotty bits of paper, empty coffee cups and cigarette butts left all over CRASH Towers by the nasty ZZAP reviewers.

Bombjack has a slightly more dangerous job to perform on a day to day basis — fortunately for him the bombs he has to collect never seem to explode, no matter how long he takes to get to them.

The nice Mr Wilcox at Elite Systems is well chuffed with the way his programming team have converted the arcade game to run on the Spectrum. To celebrate the success of yet another CRASH Smash, he's going to let a lucky CRASH reader have a Bombjack arcade machine totally free of charge — and if you want to own this marvellous piece of interactive furniture it's time to get your thinking caps on.

Imagine you're Bombjack. You want to go on holiday for a couple of weeks, but first you have to train an assistant to collect the bombs lying around the five exotic locations contained in the game. Read the review that appears on Page 20 of this issue very carefully and put together a Bombjack Super Hero Bomb Collecting Manual to pass on to your apprentice hero.

It might be helpful if you mentioned all the nasties contained in the game, for instance. Artist's impressions or diagrams of the attacking meanies should be useful to your successor — and if you feel like offering a few tips and hints on achieving a nice high score . . . well pop them in your Bombjack Manual as well.

Include a portrait of the apprentice hero you would choose to take over your bomb collecting role as well, if you like, but whatever you do, make sure those entries arrive at BOMBJACK MANUAL, CRASH, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB before 24th April — that's the day we'll sort out who wins the machine to play on their holidays! Make sure you pin our official entry form to your Manual — or copy it onto the back cover, at the very least!

Crash Competition

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

....

.... POST CODE ....

T SHIRT SIZE ....


MOVIE
Imagine
..the name of the game
3D GANGSTERS "HIT" YOUR SCREEN
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Interactive 'bubble' speech adds to the drama of this true life detective movie
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CHANGEABLE

April is a relatively quiet time in the microcomputer games world when commentators like myself and the companies which produce the games ponder on the state of the industry now that we've seen the last of those long wintry nights. Three aspects of the games playing scene have recently made themselves conspicuous.

The first is the rise of the cheap game reflected in Mastertronic's standing as a chart success company. Cheap games have become much more interesting recently and have become an important and sizeable part of the market. In particular the standard of graphics has risen markedly which has gone a long way towards compensating for the lack of originality expected of such games. In turn this has put an enormous amount of pressure on the expensive games to provide not only the last word in graphic techniques but also innovative features and storylines. The strain in producing such blockbusters is almost tangible to anyone who has dabbled with the idea of writing a computer game. Expensive games require an immense amount of time and dedication on the part of the programmers.

The second aspect is the demise of the small independent software house and the rise of the large combine. While the British Telecom and Ocean empires expand, so the independents have contracted, along with their innovative philosophies. Ultimate were innovative until their later games were little more than an attempt to cash in.

The third aspect is the appearance of a new computer, compatible with the 48K Spectrum, which all and sundry have attempted to critically take apart. The 128K is in fact a fitting compromise between technical novelty and software compatibility. Such compatability has ensured the computer's success and promises to supply a steady stream of games which utilise more memory, display finer graphics, and encourage greater interaction. The chief beneficiary will no doubt be arcade adventures, but the arrival of the new Sinclair model will be applauded by all quarters of the computer retail sector.

FOURMOST ADVENTURES

Producer: Global Software
Price: £7.95
Authors: various

Well, we've had hit compilations in pop music and, more recently, compilations of computer classics. Here we have four adventure games, which, if not classics, are above average and well worth a look. The tape carries four adventures chosen by Tony Bridge who writes a weekly column in Popular Computing Weekly.

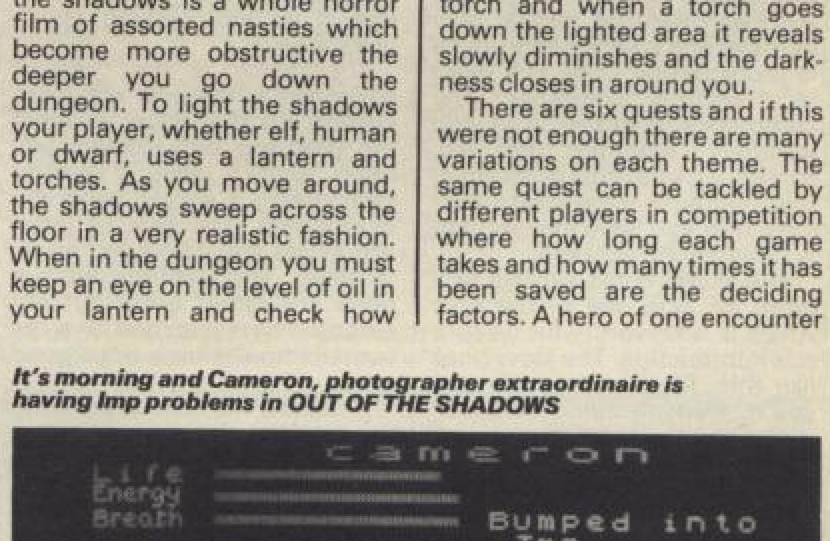
Heading the cast is Mizar's **Out of the Shadows** which was Smashed here in December 84 only to flounder for reasons only too familiar to small computer companies — the shops would take anything from large established firms, obvious winners from small concerns, but nothing involved or adventurous from new quarters. The fact that the high street shops ended up with a big load of old rubbish on their shelves in any case is neither here nor there, small games houses didn't stand a chance. *Out of the Shadows* still plays like a very good program but the graphics are crude by todays exacting standards, and indeed, if any criticism can be aimed at a tape that brings you four full games for under £8, it is that the games on this tape are a little dated. That said, the tape represents exceedingly good valve for money.

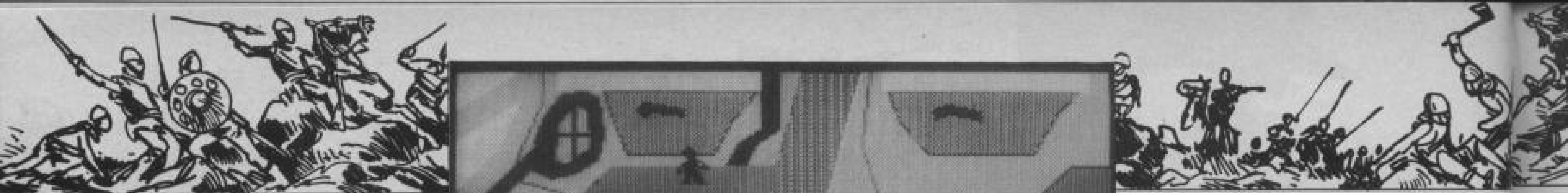
Out of the Shadows is an arcade adventure which dwells in the world of monsters and magic requiring a subtle blend of technique with out and out battle bravado. It stands as one of the more successful attempts to bring the flavour of the Dungeons and Dragons game to the computer screen. The figures behind the game are impressive. 300 commands, 500 locations, 14 types of monster and 50 different types of object describe what is a deceptively complex game (for some tips on play see CRASH May 85).

The principal innovation which runs through the game, and the one which gives the game its title, is the way the ground about you is illuminated by your flame when play takes you below ground or after nightfall. What tends to come out of the shadows is a whole horror film of assorted nasties which become more obstructive the deeper you go down the dungeon. To light the shadows your player, whether elf, human or dwarf, uses a lantern and torches. As you move around, the shadows sweep across the floor in a very realistic fashion. When in the dungeon you must keep an eye on the level of oil in your lantern and check how many torches you have left. A lantern casts a larger light than a torch and when a torch goes down the lighted area it reveals slowly diminishes and the darkness closes in around you.

There are six quests and if this were not enough there are many variations on each theme. The same quest can be tackled by different players in competition where how long each game takes and how many times it has been saved are the deciding factors. A hero of one encounter

It's morning and Cameron, photographer extraordinaire is having Imp problems in OUT OF THE SHADOWS





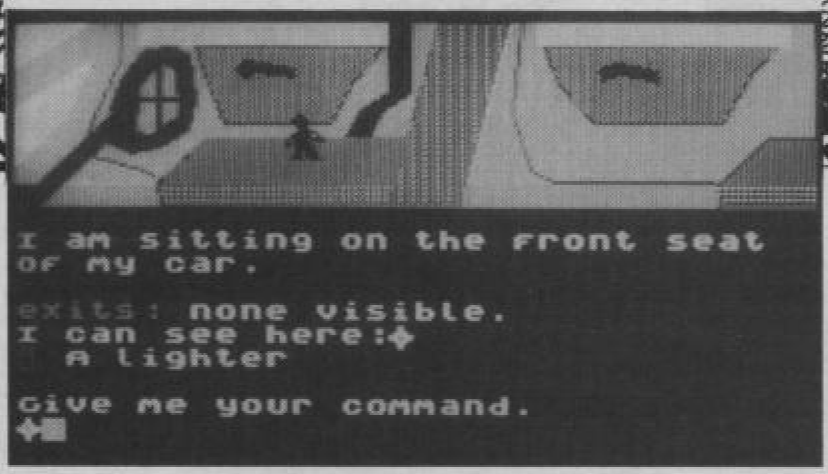
can set off on a new quest with the same hard won trophies. Possessions such as torches and copper coins are soon amassed by opening or attacking crates and jars. Valuables can be taken to the shop for the buying and selling of provisions such as food, needed to counteract the energy-sapping spells you cast. Delving deeper into the dungeon you meet more powerful adversaries and the burden of ever increasing treasures, which weigh you down and make you short of breath during combat. Taking on foes leads to increased confidence, strength and dexterity. Should combat become too injurous, it's worth remembering how natural healing occurs at a greater pace nearer the surface.

Project X — The Microman was reviewed here in September 85 and was the game that used every programming aid in the book: *Melbourne Draw* for its loading screen, *Quill* & *Illustrator*, and *The Patch*, a programming device which explains the sudden appearance of startlingly realistic telephone ringings, wailing sirens and so on. The game sports the extremely useful STORE/RECALL from memory commands while the standard of screen presentation is very high with a smart and helpful text layout and different colours breaking up the screen.

The story centres around a Professor Neil Richards whom you play as he struggles to come to terms with a freak accident in his laboratory. While working there he irradiates himself and immediately drives off to his colleague's lab a few miles away. Your task is to enter the colleague's home but your size has been reduced to that of a hamster and your friend's house is protected by COM 2, a high-tech security computer. The computer's chief task is to stop intruders entering the lab, something you must do to attain the antidote to the animal miniaturization you have inadvertently turned upon yourself.

The Mural is the second program on side one of the tape which is noteworthy for its curious introduction. The story goes like this. It's a sunny day and you're walking along Neasden High Street in the hope of finding some excitement when suddenly you're accosted by two men wearing suspender belts (anything is possible in Knees-up Neasden). You discover you have been sent by the Tightmouse Board of Censors to engage you in a task of painting over an obscene mural. Having made their deliverance they knock you out, and here's where we actually get to the adventure you must tackle — you awake to find yourself in a cave.

The first frame has moss and lichen growing in a large dark, dank cave but moss and lichen need light so that ruins this one a bit. Getting into the adventure things don't improve much. The



Sitting in the front seat of your car in PROJECT X — THE MICROMAN. Can you reach the steering wheel, oh tiny one?

whole of this adventure has a dated feel. Its linear storyline unfolds in a lacklustre fashion with the poor and inadequate EXAMINE command responding when the program deems it necessary. The program only responds when you're getting somewhere and so the one-way feel of the plot becomes only too apparent. In general the program is unresponsive and has a bad case of the 'You Can'ts'. Not far north of the first location you'll meet a penguin who jumps in to block your return south. There is nothing wrong with not being able to hit or kill the flipping animal, but the program could at least acknowledge your attempts to do something that's pretty obvious given the circumstances. There are many examples of dated vocabulary sorting with GET MAGGOTS failing to pick up a TIN of maggots and GET PASS failing to acquire a pass CARD. This kind of nit-picking awkwardness in adventuring passed long ago — now authors are much more considerate. In other areas the program goes beyond being unresponsive and strikes a note of being purely naff. When trying to enter the back door of the cottage to the south OPEN DOOR is unsuccessful while UNLOCK DOOR does the trick; this is without picking up or using a key!

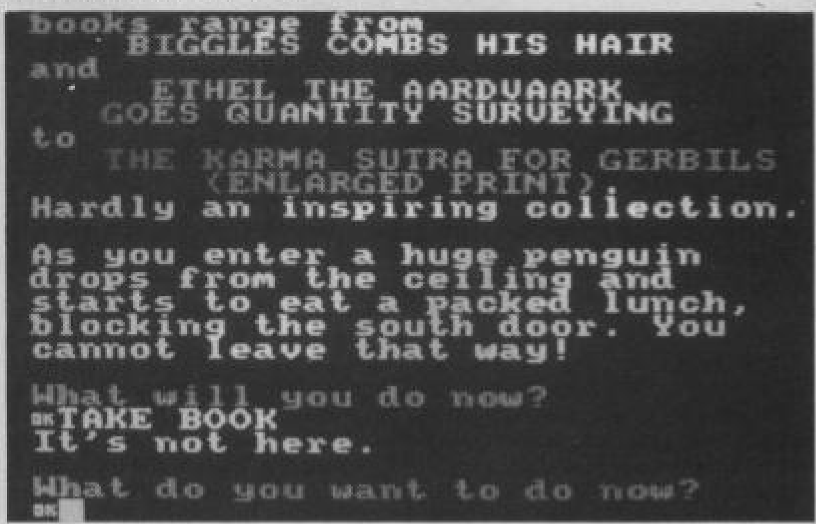
The Mural is the type of adventure which just sits there waiting for the player to input the one and only correct solution. While it waits, it sees no reason why it should keep you entertained. The lack of interaction has you quietly going off to sleep. The location descriptions are rather good but not extensively researched and the overall impression is not a good one.

Galaxias, the fourth game on the cassette, is from the same devious mind which devised *Bored of the Rings* and *Robin of Sherlock*, namely Fergus McNeill. This game predates its two famous successors but is an early sign of the inventive genius which was to give *The Quill* some rare chart success. Loading up, the game presents a pleasant face with a very attractive futuristic redesigned character set. What's more, it is eminently readable. Exits are clearly marked and there are a few, rather average, graphics.

As a space pirate your mission is to tour the planet of the local system and find a fabled crystal. The on board computer gives a rundown of the planets within range and much of your time is spent exploring these planets, collecting the items there, and deciphering the clues scattered about them. You begin in the hideously decorated Zagro spaceport, I mean, can you imagine a mirror glass corridor with a green roof light. The first part of the adventure unwinds itself in a reasonable manner except for the discrepancy by which food is eaten from the inventory while drink is drunk but remains in your list of possessions. An alcohol reclamation unit off the bar turns out to be the toilet with soft music to help you relax. The wall behind the bar is burnt with many laser scorch marks. There are quite a few other examples of the budding comic genius.

Galaxias is an interesting program with a superb redefined character set and some welcome comic touches. The detailed descriptions of the different planets you visit make the game most enjoyable and a notable member of the four.

Looks like you're in some sort of a library in MURAL. Aaagh! dodge the falling penguin!



(Full reviews of *Out of the Shadows* and *Project X — The Microman* appeared in the December 1984 and September 1985 issues of CRASH respectively. The ratings are reproduced here.)

COMMENTS

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Difficulty: easy to play but will take months to complete
Graphics: good original lighting concept
Presentation: very good
Input facility: arcade response
Response: good
General rating: excellent

Atmosphere	9
Vocabulary	8
Logic	8
Addictive quality	9
Overall	**9**

PROJECT X — THE MICROMAN

Difficulty: many tricky points due to unfriendly vocabulary
Graphics: some, generally poor
Presentation: good use of colour in redefined text
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: instant *Quill* response
General rating: good value

Atmosphere	7
Vocabulary	5
Logic	6
Addictive quality	6
Overall	**6**

THE MURAL

Difficulty: not difficult
Graphics: none
Presentation: good
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: fast
General rating: strange, humorous in places, but generally disappointing

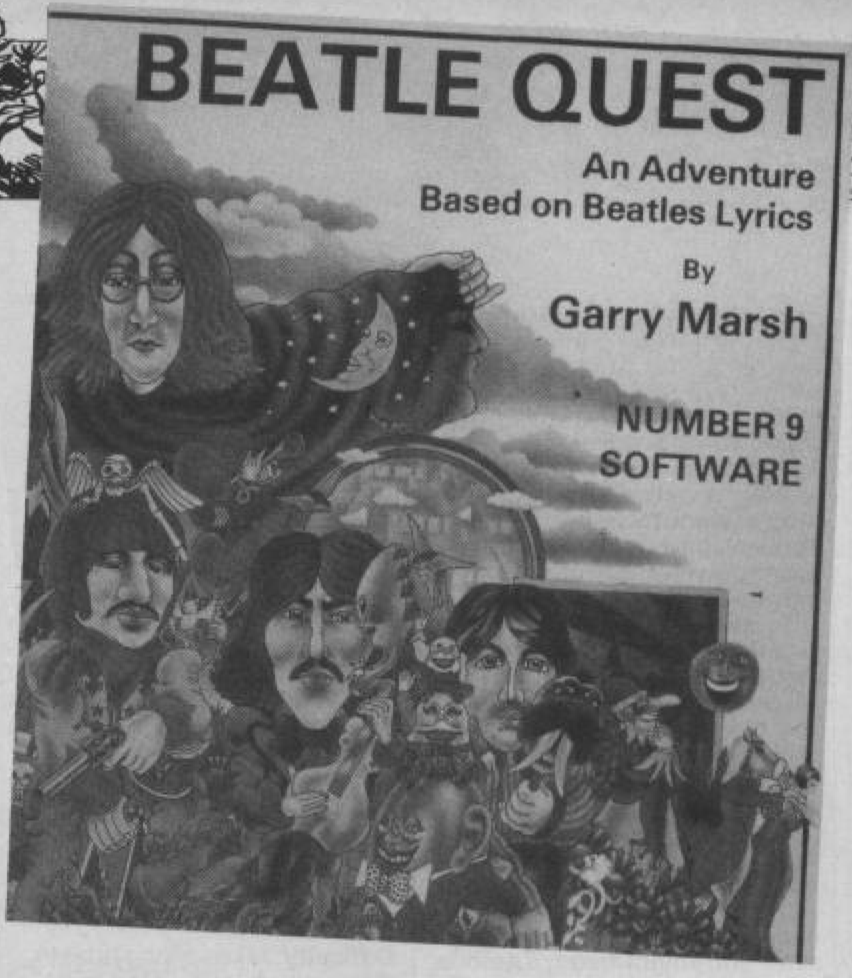
Atmosphere	7
Vocabulary	4
Logic	5
Addictive Quality	6
Overall	**6**

GALAXIAS

Difficulty: quite easy
Graphics: a few, average
Presentation: superb character set
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: fast *Quill* response
General rating: entertaining

Atmosphere	7
Vocabulary	7
Logic	7
Addictive Quality	8
Overall	**7**





BEATLE QUEST

Producer: Number 9
Price: £9.95
Author: Garry Marsh

I think how well this game does will not rely so much on its detailed review, but on the games-player's feelings towards the subject matter. The Beatles were a long time ago, and unless you've been watching too much television you'll realise by now that the home games-playing market is quite young (the belated conversion of a staid publishing rival is testament to that).

Let's have a look at the first frame, which follows a picture of the famous zebra crossing outside the Abbey Road recording studio in London. 'You are in a bedsitter, circa 1969. You recognise it from the Hist/soc-sit-com vids back home, eg Hancock and The Liver Birds. The flowered wallpaper is brown and peeling; the naked light bulb flickers dimly. You can see a sink full of dirty dishes; the cooker needs cleaning. At the far end of the room is a divan bed. Someone is lying on the bed. A telephone lies nearby. You can see a pair of knitting needles.'

You might be a little puzzled by some of the above, so let me take you through it. Your view of the Beatles era is from a space station of 2953, where life is sedate and peaceful — and boring. All your needs are catered for by the supreme machine Sel-Taeb 4, a word which if reversed says 4 Beatles. As keeper of the archives it is your responsibility to ensure that the New Earth retains its past. Your present interest is in the pre Dark-Times mythology, particularly the ballards of the so-called New Renaissance Minstrels. The four kings of Emi are more familiar to us as the four musicians who gave EMI some very profitable years.

The way in which you score points in the adventure is very much like any other, with the player collecting objects of interest and returning them to the bedsitter at the start location. What is different is that the collection of some items seems to decrease your score — or perhaps asking for your score reflects a competitive attitude unbecoming of the sixties? Also, your advance through the adventure will only be assured if you first familiarize yourself with Beatles lyrics, which, naturally enough, will only be easy if you possess their records or have one of the many books published shortly after John Lennon's death on a New York street — an event which made no more Beatles reunions a cert. An appreciation of sixties slang wouldn't go amiss either.

Beatle Quest, from a company that gets its name from a joke of John Lennon's which coalesced around the number nine, is full of sixties atmophere. Everyone seemed either naive or idealistic in the sixties, but society seemed a good deal happier for it. The greedy, grabbing, fizzy, sickly-sweet, simplistic, superficial effervecence of the eighties was never suspected; if it was, I doubt whether a single hippy would have bothered getting out of bed. Recently radio stations have been playing fresh copies of sixties classics, notable for the sharpness of the lyrics, and the BBC are repeating the Hancock half hours. Like the recent Till Death Us Do Part repeat, Hancock showed how good television could be before the BBC settled down into its old regime of cold baths, pathetic sell-outs and a feeling that its primary purpose was to keep the masses quiet and blissfully unaware. If the recent nostalgia for the sixties continues, and replaces the nostalgia for Victorian Empire, the BBC will be better for it. The superbly crafted and atmospheric adventure of the fab four, featuring officially endorsed lyrics, isn't a bad place to start your trip down memory lane.

A girl in a bedsit greets you in a game for musicologists (LMLWD) and Beatle fans, that's BEATLE QUEST.



COMMENTS

Difficulty: difficult
Graphics: some — imaginative
Presentation: redesigned character set
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: fast
General rating: psychedelic

Atmosphere	9
Vocabulary	6
Logic	5
Addictive Quality	7
Overall	7

TIME SANCTUARY

Producer: MC Lothlorien
Price: £7.95
Authors: Peter & George Carmpouloni

To put it bluntly this game is like a cut down version of *Lords of Midnight* without all the interesting bits. The graphical style could be described as 'art de la primary school' with blocky trees and characters depicted as small blobs. What with the large trees and small houses the whole thing looks out of proportion. What you do with the game is hardly awe-inspiring either, and its playability is limited and becomes boring.

Professor Mathius Calculus has been murdered and you, his closest assistant, are under suspicion as you alone possessed the security pass to the laboratory's security door. The prof's latest invention was a time machine and rather than stick around to face the inquisition you decide to take your chances on a trip through time. Perhaps you might be able to go back in time and prevent the murder from happening.

The time machine malfunctions before you can reach the Time Sanctuary. You end up in a strange land populated by tribes and the wizards which oversee them. There are villages, temples, forests, lakes and other places that you must explore before you can seriously hope to find the time machine and the fuel to propel it. The local people are a very important factor in the game and a good relationship with them will see you progress smoothly. The natives and the monsters of the land each follow their own way of life but you are able to communicate with them. Some of these are friendly, others unhelpful. Their personalities are summed up between the attributes of stamina, health, intelligence, greedyness, honesty, bravery and attitude.

One of the rooms in TIME SANCTUARY, decorated according to the minimalist school of furnishing





An over-riding factor is the limited amount of time available for your quest. Should you take too long your flesh decomposes and you will have had your chips. For example, to search a house takes 15 minutes while scaring a person takes 5 minutes. This concept is a touch implausable but having the time count down on the main screen may have added something.

To move about you press **1** to turn left, **3** to turn right and **2** to move forward in the chosen direction. **E** enters a house, **M** has you talking to someone while **I** brings up your inventory displays the time remaining. Sub options allow you to search a house (which all look much the same) and scrolling windows give you the chance to bring two words together to say something meaningful to any character you might meet. The one thing wrong with the system is its apparent arbitrariness whereby a character alternatively looks scared or does not look scared and so on.

Time Sanctuary is a game let down by its looks and its playability. The characters all look the same and the game soon lapses into the familiar territory of all games which haven't quite been



thought out properly — boredom. Just as a book must hook a reader less he become disinterested, so a computer game must involve the player to an extent that he wishes to more than just see the game through.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: takes a long time to discover what you have to do
Graphics: simple
Input facility: scrolling windows
Response: average
General rating: flawed

Atmosphere	**6**
Logic	**6**
Addictive Quality	**5**
Overall	**6**

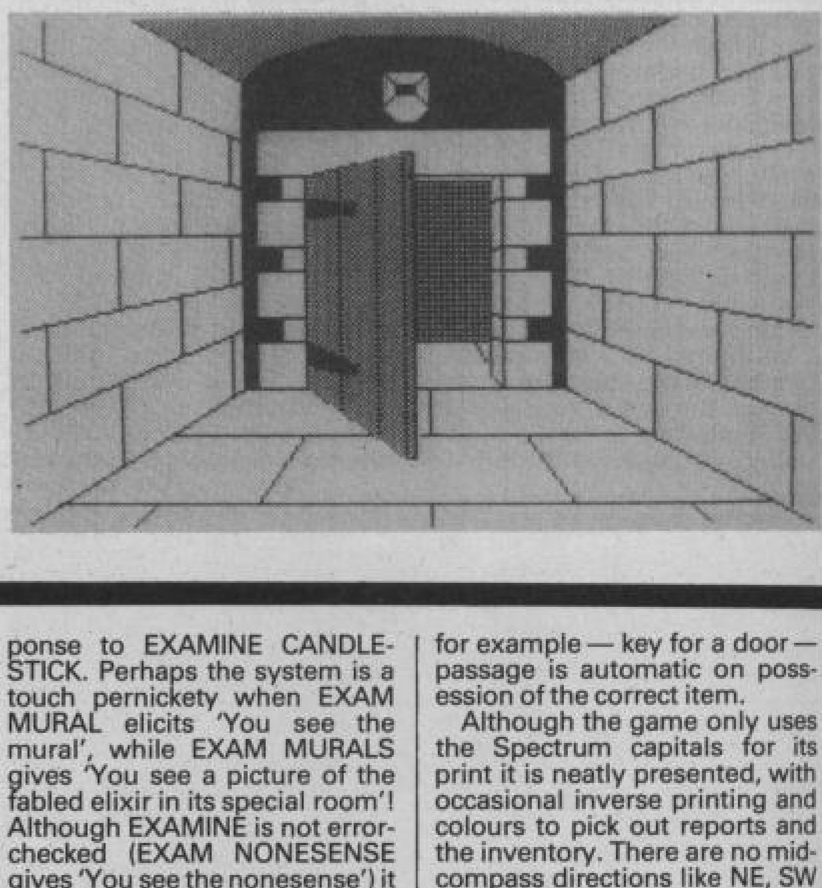
CURSE OF SHALETH/ DESPERADO

Producer: Central Solutions
Price: £1.99
Author: M V Gearing

These games come in the 'dumped in your lap with no documentation now get on with it' category. I get the impression from what little I have that these two games are offered as the one package. *Curse of Shaleth* is a reasonable jaunt which has you cast as the captive of a collar curse which tightens around your neck as play progresses. *Desperado* is the type of game where, unlike *Shaleth*, it is easy to wander about for miles. In terms of difficulty the games compare like chalk and cheese.

Curse of Shaleth proves very difficult beyond the fourth location. I should know because this is how far I could get. The first

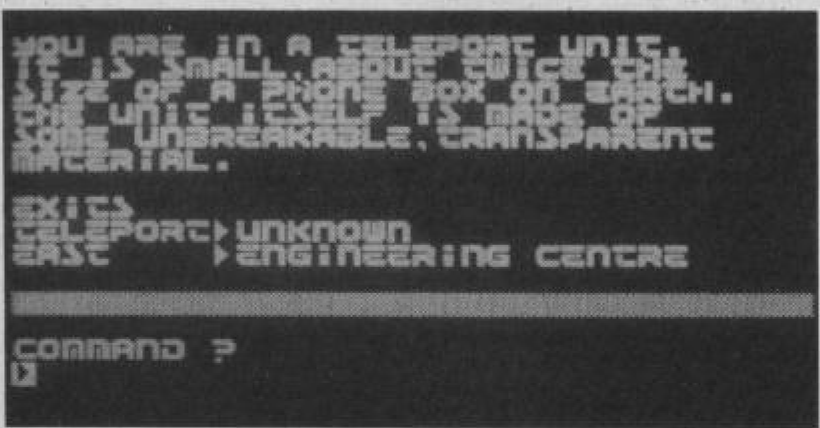
An ominous portal opens in front of you as you struggle with THE CURSE OF SHALETH



TEMPLE TERROR

Producer: Atlantis
Price: £1.99
Author: Robert Burgess

Budget software is here to stay, and here Atlantis offer a cheap way of enjoying adventuring. The game is basic and straightforward, but eminently playable



The pretty new character set used in TEMPLE TERROR

and would be especially interesting to a novice adventurer.

Archie the explorer is trying to save his daughter, whose life is in danger from an incurable disease. She has been given a month to live, but there is a glimmer of hope. One day he reads of a newly found temple where a legendary elixir of healing is said to lie. Two previous explorers who tried to uncover the secrets of the tomb were never seen again, and Archie soon discovers their fate as he sets out on his quest in the temple.

The layout and feel of this adventure are very traditional. Objects are scattered about in sensible places, and the solutions to the problems are logical and go down nicely as play proceeds. Some of the problems are cliched, like how to get rid of the vampire (yes, that one again!), but most are novel or at least fun. The vocabulary is notable for its insistance on full word entry, though T for TAKE is useful. The effort of the verbose entry system is compensated by its intelligence when EXAM CANDLE gives a different response to EXAMINE CANDLESTICK. Perhaps the system is a touch pernickety when EXAM MURAL elicits 'You see the mural', while EXAM MURALS gives 'You see a picture of the fabled elixir in its special room'! Although EXAMINE is not error-checked (EXAM NONESENSE gives 'You see the nonesense') it is very powerful and atmosphere enhancing, with every important item or place in the adventure eliciting some response to the command.

It's not just the EXAMINE command which gives intelligent responses. CLIMB TREE near the start elicits 'The trees start swaying in the breeze so you decide not to', and even the SAVE option very kindly guides with a reminder that the game saves in three parts — very polite. LIGHT CANDLE in an inappropriate location and you get 'Why do you want to light a candle in a lighted room?', which is helpful; the response 'I'm sorry I don't understand' when you try to illuminate a dark room because you don't have the matches is less helpful. The problems are often solved by having the appropriate object to get through the corresponding difficulty, in the simplest case for example — key for a door — passage is automatic on possession of the correct item.

Although the game only uses the Spectrum capitals for its print it is neatly presented, with occasional inverse printing and colours to pick out reports and the inventory. There are no mid-compass directions like NE, SW and so on.

Temple Terror is as straightforward and as traditional an adventure as you can get. To a novice the game has much to offer, and at its low price many will no doubt discover the secrets of the temple without too much loss of sleep.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy to moderate
Graphics: none
Presentation: neat
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: fast enough
General rating: cheap and easy

Atmosphere	7
Vocabulary	7
Logic	7
Addictive quality	7
Overall	7



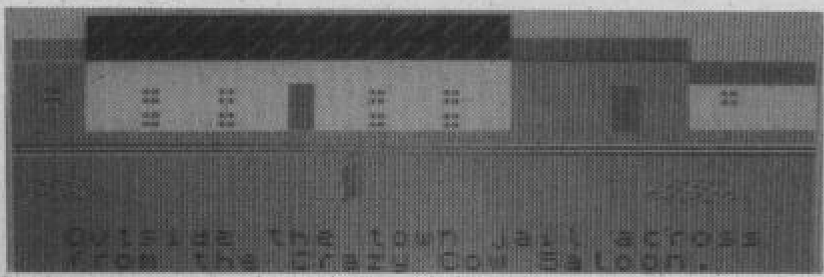
frame goes like this: 'Evil taints the air as you stand alone in the lair of Shaleth, master sorcerer and mightiest of the Dark Lords. To the north an iron door stands open, the dark passage beyond offering little in the way of escape. The bleak stone walls, unadorned but for the years of dust, surround and seem to imprison you'. Any mistakes in the above can be attributed to the fact that the redesigned character set, though atmospheric, is difficult to read.

In the very first location you meet the body of Shaleth which, when examined, appears unconscious. SEARCH BODY and you discover a silver amulet. As you search, the collar tightens around your neck, an evil laugh fills your mind, and the body of Shaleth decides to disappear. That leaves you with just the globe but at least the program differentiates between SEARCH and EXAM, something I always take as a good sign. Inside the globe is the Eye of the Runes, trapped within the crystal but EXAMining the runes reveals nothing special, while READing the runes gives the abrupt 'You can't do that'. EXAMining the amulet does give 'the amulet is strange, half wolf and half bird. An inscription says, this trinket has power, three times may you spend. Just utter the word but look to the end.' To the north, through an open door, you find a rusty saw which proves useless when trying to saw the barred windows to the east and west. I've given you all the clues, now can you get any further?

Let's have a look at the flipside story. A week ago the sheriff drove out of town with a posse to capture Black Jake and his gang who robbed the Sweetwater Stage for the fifth time. As deputy you are left in sole charge of law and order. You're now getting anxious about the fate of the sheriff — maybe it's time you rode out to aid in the capture of that low-down, no-good, two-timing *Desperado*. The game has a lot of desert, cotton grass flats, and general darkness on the edge of towns. There's the usual Western adornments of Jailhouse, Undertaker, Saloon and Hotel through which you pass looking for the odd stetson, canteen, and the occasional hand of poker. Any problems I did meet were very easy to deal with — perhaps deceptively so?



Stumping around outside the town jail in DESPERADO — you're just across the street from the saloon in case thirst overcomes you



COMMENTS

CURSE OF SHALETH

Difficulty: difficult
Graphics: alright for a cheap game
Presentation: Okay
Input Facility: v/n
Response: fast
General rating: not bad

Atmosphere	7
Vocabulary	6
Logic	6
Addictive quality	6
Overall	**6**

DESPERADO

Difficulty: easy
Graphics: passable
Presentation: Okay
Input facility: v/n
Response: fast
General rating: quite a trek

Atmosphere	7
Vocabulary	6
Logic	7
Addictive quality	6
Overall	**6**

S·I·G·N S·T·U·M·P·S

If lasts month's mail was something to shout about, this month's mail bag was quite amazing. Thanks for all the tips on **Lord of the Rings** ***and*** **Mindshadow** ***— I can't say enough how helpful these are to the column. Keep on sending them in and I'll endeavour to answer as many queries each month as possible.***

This month **Subsunk** ***from Firebird has been causing quite a few problems.*** *Ian Whebun* ***from Manchester asks:***

" 1) How do you get the aspirin out of the bottle without losing it?
2) How do you turn off the tap?
3) How do you unblock the sink? "

To get an aspirin you must go down to the location with the mat and UJQ CPUUMF. I don't think the tap can be turned off, but to unblock the sink you need the rubber sucker from the tool box, then QMVOHF CBTJO.

Also on the same game *Stephen Duxbury* ***of Liverpool asks:***

" Where can I find the glue to join the two pieces of map together? " ***while*** *Kevin Lock* ***in West Sussex is unable to open the safe.***

To repair the map you need to make glue from various food elements around the sub (read the note). To open the safe you will need the stethoscope and the repaired map.

B Porter ***of Sheffield is having difficulty with Firebird's other adventure,*** **The Helm,** ***and asks:***

" 1) How do you enter the Lich's castle? I think you have to find the needle in a haystack as it understands 'pick lock' but I can't find the wording for haystack searching!
2) How are the torch and bulb connected? I presume they are.
3) What's the gramophone for?
4) How is the Psyak defeated? I keep taking reluctant baths! "

You are right about needing to find a needle in the haystack. To do this you must VTF TQFDUBDMFT. Incidentally, the needle is also of use with the gramophone. To prevent yourself from being hypnotised by the Psyak you must TIJOF UPSDI. As far as I know the bulb can't be inserted into the torch.

Stephen is also having difficulty with **Kentilla** ***and asks:*** **" How do I pass the glowing ward in the Black Tower and how do I use Velnor's staff? "**

Both these problems are linked. To destroy the ward you must IJU XBSE XJUI TUBGG. To use the staff you must first discover the magic word which can be found by examining the emerald in a dark location.

Also on **Kentilla,** *Colin Buteux* ***in Buxton, Derbyshire asks:*** **" I am in Tylon's Castle, but can't seem to find anywhere to go other than the room with the dial. Also, the wooden boat won't go into the Serpent sea. "**

If you wear the magic gold ring you should be able to use the secret passage in Tylon's Lab. The boat has caused problems because in the old version you must PULL BOAT in the new version you should PUSH BOAT.

Our January Smash, **Mindshadow,** ***has proved popular and in this game*** *Mark Bonnar* ***from Glasgow is having difficulty using the map to negotiate the swamp.***

You must go to the hut and then follow the arrows on the map; arrow up is North, right is East etc.



ENCRYPTION CORNER

It's easy to speak Brewster!

ENGLISH:	ZABCDEFGHIJKL
BREWSTER:	ABCDEFGHIJKLM
ENGLISH:	MNOPQRSTUVWXY
BREWSTER:	NOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Mark Adams ***of Salisbury writes:*** **" In the hit** Gremlins **how do you blow up the department store. I have trapped all the Gremlins in the vent system by welding the metal plates over the vents, but now I am stumped. "**

To cause an explosion you must connect the gas pipe into the vent system. You will need to cut the pipe from the pump in the bar.

In **Red Moon,** *Donald Findby* ***from Edinburgh is having difficulty with the pool of acid.***

You should ESPQ JO UIF DIBML to neutralise it. Still on **Red Moon** ***I should apologise for the mix up with the solution to crossing the red line in the January issue. You should simply SVC JU PVU.***

Back to the ever popular **Hobbit** ***where*** *Leon Butler* ***in South Yorks is unable to escape through the window from the Goblin Dungeon or enter the barrel in the Elven King's hall without first killing the butler.***

If I remember correctly, to escape from the dungeon you must SAY TO THORIN "OPEN WINDOW", SAY TO THORIN "CARRY ME" (if he refuses try again), SAY TO THORIN "EAST" (or whatever way the window is, it may be west!). To enter the barrel without being caught by the butler you must be invisible by wearing Gollum's ring.

Melbourne House's **Mordon's Quest** ***is causing problems for*** *Colin Buteux* ***who writes:*** **" I can't get out of the cannibal's hut once inside (I'm not sure if you're meant to do anything inside there anyhow). More importantly, I can't get past the carnivorous plant blocking my path in the jungle. Also, I can't seem to do anything inside the elephant enclosure. "**

You need to make a CMPX QJQF to kill the Pygmy. After this you will be able to feed the plant.

S·U·P·E·R·H·E·R·O·E·S

As with all parts of the column this month there has been a huge response to SUPERHEROES. " As you sail down the river the words of the party ring through your head. Congratulations, for you are truly a master adventurer. We know you will not fail in the adventures still to come your way. " This is what greeted our Lord of the Rings **SUPERHERO at 3.30am on 6th January.** *Keith Moore* **just pipped** *J Graham* **who discovered the message a few days later on the 9th.** *Matthew Newell* **in West Bromwich completed** Mindshadow **on the 20th of January at 8.35pm just beating** *Gregory Quinn* **to the accolade (25th).** *Philip Hancock* **sailed the full breadth of the** Seas of Blood **on February 20th.**



QUESTPROBE
FEATURING
THE HUMAN TORCH
AND THE
THING
by SCOTT ADAMS
with art by
RON WILSON AND
JOE SINNOTT
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RULES ON ROLES

Dear Derek,
I thought I would add my opinions to the continuing debate over the Role-Playing Adventure. I play RPGs (AD & D, M.E.R.P., Star Trekand Judge Dredd among others) and while I have read with interest the various letters extolling or condemning the various attempts by programmers to bring the RPG to the computer, I feel that most of them are missing the point.

By their very definition RPGs are games where the players create PCs (Player Characters) according to the particular rules system of the game concerned, and then proceed under the guidance of their Dungeon Master or Game Master to take part in a scenario. It is at this point that computer games and the normal game start to differ.

The whole idea of role-playing is to take on the part of the character and make decisions as you would think he/she would. For example: imagine KRAGO the Brave and Fearless Fighter is out adventuring. In search of that illusive fortune that, however hard he tries, always seems to end up in the till of the local tavern. Well there is Krago wandering through fantasy land when he espies a large tower decorated tastefully in gold and gems. 'Well, that will do for me,' he thinks to himself and without a moment's hesitation proceeds to charge towards the tower doing a fine impression of a medieval Rambo and unfortunately is shot to death by Orc archers before he gets within 50 yards of the main gate. Alas end of attack, S'Shame.

The reason things like this happen is because the player must/is supposed to act as his character would, or at least as the player sees it, according to the statistics and personality of the PC. In the above example while Krago was brave, strong and fearless he was also, unfortunately for him, rather dim and lacking something in the brain department. The player who was playing Krago was aware of this and so reacted as Krago would have done had he been real, ie charge in and get the treasure first before checking out the situation and doing a recce. This is the essence of role playing, it should be 'well, what would my character do' rather than 'what shall I do now!').

In computer games the player, although often given a character with a background, still reacts to outside stimuli by following courses of action he or she would follow rather than what the character would do. This is why I feel there is as yet no proper role-playing adventure yet available on the computer, although some brave attempts have been made. Giving the player a name and a short history/background to the person(s) he is playing is not the same thing at all. I realise it would be very difficult to program a computer so as to arrive at an end where the player actually plays AER DRESSAIR the Mighty Elven Maga reacting and performing actions that Aer would do, and of which he would have knowledge rather than giving the player a name to use and then just letting him get on with it. I hope you can understand what I'm getting at.

As for ideas for getting round the problem I think the best way at the moment (until some clever person invents a super computer) would be to have a game that required both a use of the rather more standard paper and pen as well as a computer program.

Firstly it would have to be a game where more than one person can play (something like The Prince). The actual characters could be created by the computer program, like some of the ones available to generate AD & D characters, or by more normal dice rolling methods. These characters and their statistics could then be written down and the player could develop a quick persona for their PC. The actual scenario could then be loaded into the computer and the players could then take turns at typing in responses to the computer's prompts, just like a normal adventure in fact.

The beauty of this system is that the players can react to situations as their character would. Obviously, the program would need to be intelligent to cope with unorthodox requests, rather than the annoying 'you can't' or 'I don't understand'. Any statistics used would also have to have a use, ie strength in combat and dexterity when picking locks. Personally I feel this sort of program would be closer to role-playing than just giving the player a name and land to identify with. It would of course rely on the player actually doing what their character would do rather than what they would themselves, so they would have to restrain their urge to cheat, or alternatively appoint a DM to watch over the proceedings and possibly type in responses at the computer to stop those whose wise side gets the better of them.

Duncan Hoyes
Higher Blackleg
Manchester

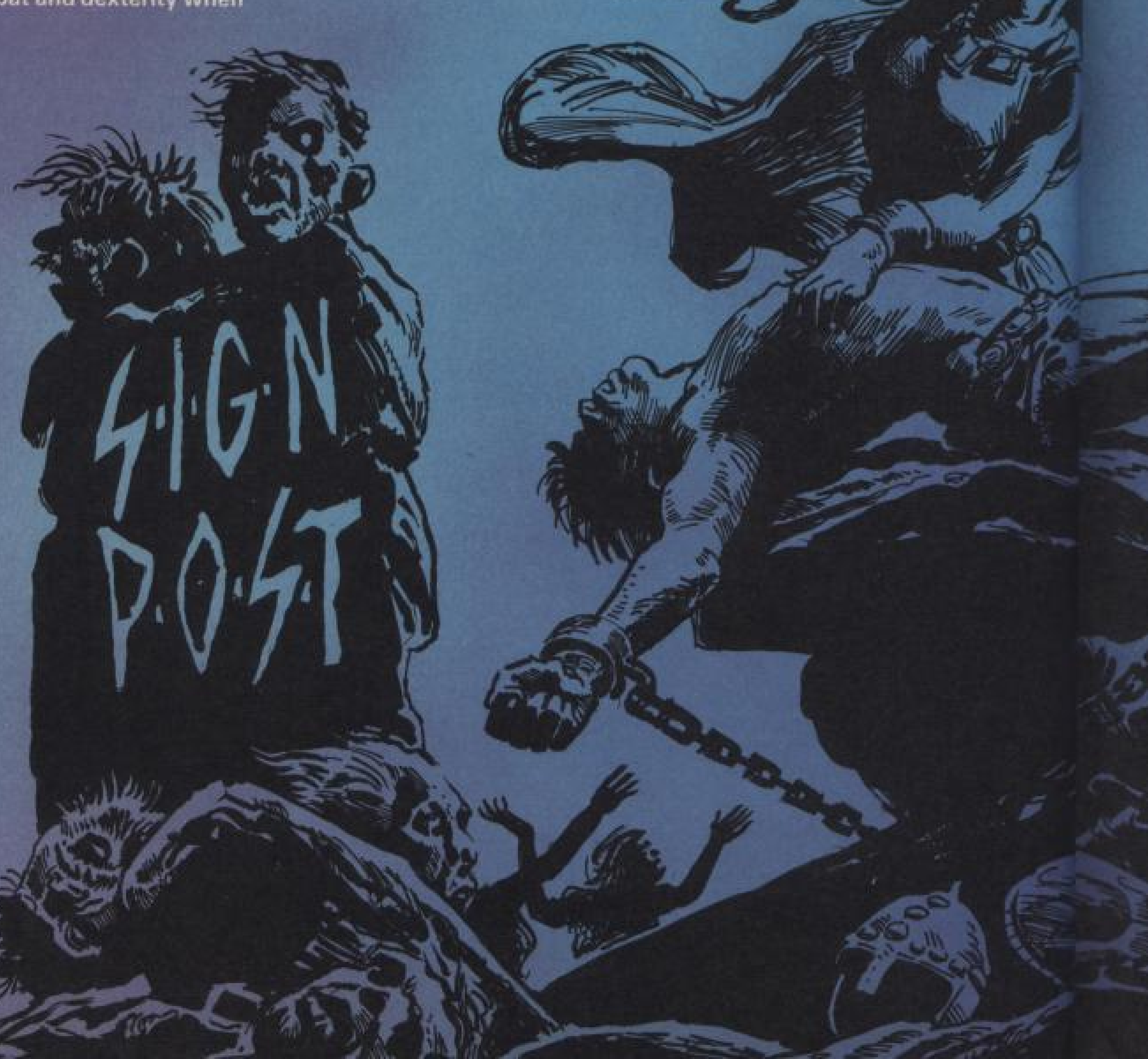
I think you may be taking the idea of following the rules in a role-playing game a bit too far. Was it really necessary for Krago to behave suicidally in his attack on the tower? After all, even the most stupid animals have a sense of danger and self preservation. Besides, isn't it more important in role-playing to be consistent in a character's behaviour rather than to behave rigidly according to an initial set of statistics?

As the character should last many months of game playing it is important that the player can identify with his character and enjoy playing it. Role-playing games don't have rigid rules and so are open to various interpretations. However I feel that your character would be best played by a computer rather than a human.

Also, how would you help a dim player who has an intelligent character? In short, I think intelligence is the one attribute which cannot really be played consistently, unless it is the same as the player's — although other characteristics like good†evil, lawful†chaotic should be played as initially determined, and a character failing to do so would be penalized in experience points.

I don't think having a human DM for a computer game would really catch on. However, I see no reason why a game couldn't be written which awarded points more for the way your character responded to situations than for killing monsters and solving problems. I'd like to hear from others who have views on this subject.

DB



POKES

Dear Derek,
Why should Robin Candy get all the POKES? The following program prints out the vocabulary of Snowball and Lords of Time by Level 9. Type in the program and load the game.

```
10 LOAD "" CODE
20 IF PEEK 26999 = 84 THEN LET
A = 26360 : LET B = 29370
30 IF PEEK 26999 = 147 THEN
LET A = 27000 : LET B = 28900
40 FOR F = A TO B
45 IF ( PEEK F > 64 ) AND ( PEEK
F<91 ) THEN PRINT CHR$ PEEK
F;
50 IF ( PEEK F <= 65 ) AND (
PEEK F>= 90 ) THEN PRINT "";
60 NEXT F
```

D Foster
Gwynedd

HIGH SPEC SPECTRUM

Dear Derek,
Having bought a 128K Spectrum 4 days ago I have endeavoured to complete the 128K version of The Never Ending Story. May I just recommend this program to all readers as having played it for up to 5 hour sessions at a time it never got dull or boring. Just to prove that I have done what I say the final screen shot, before the game ends, depicts Bastian, Atreyu and Falkor flying underneath and it says Bastian, Atreyu and Falkor set off to begin rebuilding Fantasia.

David Webber
Kidderminster
Worcs

AN EXCELLENT GAME

Dear Derek,
I was reading through CRASH when I chanced upon your review of Runestone (an excellent game I might add). It looked good so I went out and bought it. After playing it for a few days I was soon stumped. I just could not find anyway to get into the Domain of Kordomir. I have been every square centimetre (or mile) on the map and found no way by either path or magic. Any help would be useful.

I have found many lost treasures namely the Runestone and the book of Zarimir. I have completed about 45% of the adventure.

Anyway, here are some tips to the game. From the start it is best to stick with one character until the others have been captured by the orcs. This is so your characters will all be in the same place, namely Krilbroth's fortified tower. It is best to explore all the huts, towers and caverns in Belorn (especially those in the south-western corner of the map) before crossing the Great Waters. By the time you do you should have with you several other characters: Bariner the Brave, Eldric the Forester, Chronos the Wise, Quester the Hermit, Skirmal the Sly, Brunor the Bold and Grimnal the Fisherman.

In the tower on the island there is an orc whose chest contains the Book of Zaphir. Ask Chronos to examine the book (five times) and she will manage to find 5 spells. Shazaroth, which transports whoever you cast it on onto the island. Lumenos, which sends a bolt of lightning towards your victim. Visimir, Which when cast on a character will make all his valuables vanish. Xaramit, which weakens whoever you cast it on and Afortis, which is a healing spell.

E Long
Liverpool

RUNNING AROUND IN RINGS

Dear Derek,
I am writing to you about the new adventure from Melbourne House entitled Lord of the Rings. It is on the whole a good adventure but there are a few snags to it. The layout is good but I do not like the way the picture scrolls off the top of the screen. Response is slow but good location descriptions are given. Also, some commands seem to have been left out of my copy. These include RUN and SCORE, and HELP doesn't work on the beginner's adventure either.

I have found Strider and managed to dodge the black riders all the way to the Last Bridge but do not know how to complete the first part of the adventure.

Timothy Bamber
Swansea

MORE PROTOCOL

Dear Sir,
I was prompted to send you some tips on the Fourth Protocol this month after reading Mark Whatling's tips last month on this excellent game. I hope they will be as helpful as I found Mark's.

a) At Oxford Street West, enter Boots and buy a camera worth £50. Be sure to have the extra cash from the treasury before you make this purchase or you'll get nicked.
b) Have a light load when you go to Dover, ie do not carry the aqualung. There is no point in carrying the aqualung because you will get burned if you try to use it, so leave it in your new office. A police car will meet you at the car park in Dover.
c) After seeing the metal disks and attempting to carry them out of the police station, you will have to find a substitute. Outside the police station go W, N, and into an ironmongers. Here you can purchase washers. Drop these at the interview room and take the discs.
d) Also at Dover, and outside the police station, you may go E and S where you will find a screwdriver. I am not sure, as yet, what its purpose in the game is.
e) Return to London and go to see Dafydd Wynne-Evans at the university. He will tell you that the disks are triggers for a nuclear bomb along with some unintelligible garbage and a note reputedly illustrating this. You will have to leave the disks there.
f) Go to Heathrow where the security guard will draw your attention to some of the Eastern European Press Corps. Take a picture of them with the camera you purchased and you will find out that there is a suspect amongst them. Therefore you must find out if there is a spy amongst them.
g) Those of you who will have tried to get information out of Blodwyn will have found that you must go through C. This time is no exception. C, in turn, will advise you to go to the Barbican to buy some flowers.
h) Anyone who has dared to venture into the Barbican will have found that it is a maze of streets. I cannot advise you on any exact movements in this maze except for the following:

1) The florist can be found by going south down a one way street and by paying her ten pounds you buy the flowers.
2) Along your adventures you will come across several different persons. One of the first will be a guard who will tell you to follow a guide. Also you will meet a tramp who, in fact, is an under-cover spy.
3) Along a one way street heading W you will find a shop selling all sorts of stuff. In their collection you will find the only possible means of escaping from this maze — a guide book — which you have to buy for £10.
4) Beware! Do not use this guide until you have purchased your flowers. Once you have entered the subway the guide is given to a lost tourist.
5) When you have purchased your flowers and escaped from the maze using your guide book you must return to see C.

i) Once you have returned to see C he will guide you to Blodwyn. Blodwyn in turn will tell you that amongst the people you photographed there is a spy by the name of Winkler. C will then ask you to take care of him.
j) Return to Heathrow. This time use the bug. You will then clumsily bump into Winkler. There is now no need to do more for the time being. The computer will merely make you follow the spy around using the receiver. When this has finished you end up in a Faslane Estate, which again is a maze. By this time you will have scored 88% or thereabouts.
k) After a little adventuring you'll come out on the eastern side of the estate where there is a guard. He will ask you to tell him where you want to go. You will now have to choose the co-ordinates of the area where you wish to go. He will first tell you what is there.

This is where I end. There is an interesting co-ordinate at C1, where there is a factory with something to do with nuclear research, or something like that. What is the next step? The computer tells you that you should go on to part III if you are positive you have the right place, but my score is still only 88%? Where is the other 12%?

Aled ab Iorwerth
Caernarfon
Gwynedd

The editor has seen my plea for a raise — not for myself but for the sender of the Letter of the Month. So £20 worth of software goes to Alad ab Iorwerth for these useful Fourth Protocol tips.
DB





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FRONTLINE



with Sean Masterson



LET'S GET TALKING . . .

This month sees the first FRONTLINE Forum. Apart from views on this column and computer wargaming in general, this is a space that you can fill by any means you see fit — in depth strategies for particular games, how you use your trusty black box to do all the work involved in calculating how long it takes 1,000 1/300 scale Hoplites to get from one side of a 4x6 foot table to the other . . . anything you feel may be of interest. If you enjoy wargaming then it's to your advantage to get others interested as well. One way of doing this is to air your views and show your enthusiasm for the hobby. Let's hear it — and if you have any tips on strategy or war games, let's have them. It's high time Robin Candy's monopoly was broken!

On the review front, most of the software companies are keeping quiet, a major exception being PSS. Apart from their latest wargame releases they are busy promoting their computer based Role Playing Game, *Swords and Sorcery*. They have taken to advertising in the leading specialist games magazines, something few software manufacturers dare to do: the standards expected from that side of the hobby are very high indeed.

Now, before you put pen to paper and say that such games are strictly Derek Brewster's domain, I should remind you that the original *Dungeons & Dragons* by Gygax and Arneson was considered a one-to-one wargame and was born out of a modified set of mediaeval melee combat rules. *Swords & Sorcery* should be considered a landmark in terms of bringing the home computing and role playing hobbies closer than ever before, with a respectable and easily accessible adaptation of the fundamental elements of a very sophisticated concept. I would very much like to hear about people's experiences in playing this game. Its open ended nature makes it a very exciting product indeed.

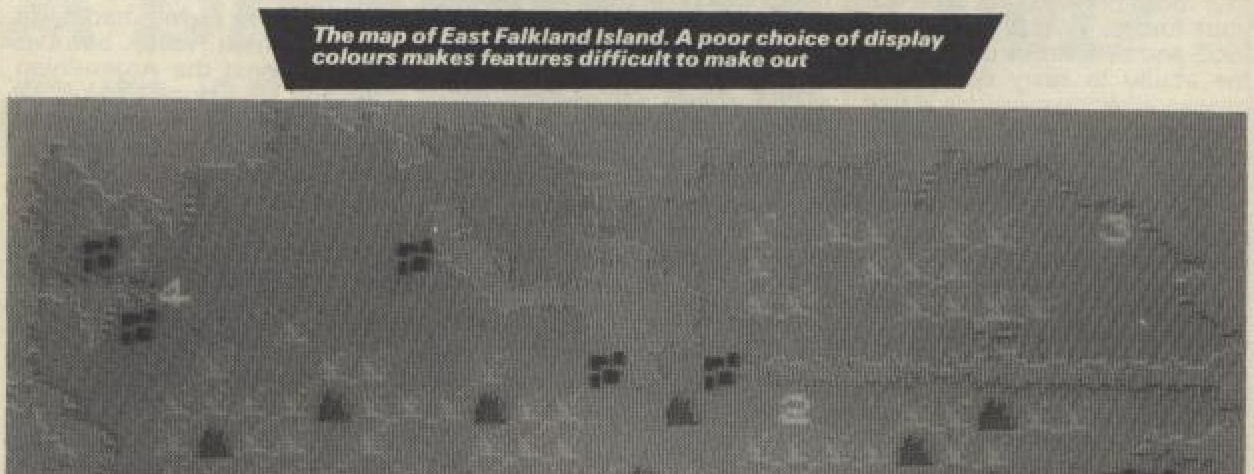
FALKLANDS '82

Producer: PSS
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **John Bethell**

Some months after its release on the Commodore 64, PSS's simulation of the battle for the Falklands has become available to Spectrum owners. The game comes in a small but neat cassette box complete with instructions for play, army lists and (brief) designer's notes. The game is intended as an introduction to wargaming and potential buyers should be aware that its detail and scope are in no way as thorough as say, *Desert Rats*. The program is a very simple simulation of the ground based conflict across the North Eastern part of the Falkland Isles with only limited appreciation of air power.

The game loads fairly quickly and immediately presents the player with a choice of difficulty levels. These range from 1 (Easy) to 5 (Masochistic) and reflect increasing morale and competence on the part of the Argentinian forces. At this point, I should note that the game is a single player only simulation

The map of East Falkland Island. A poor choice of display colours makes features difficult to make out



and there is no option to play the Argentinian forces.

Once the difficulty level has been selected, the player must allocate priority missions to ships in the task force fleet sitting off the island's shores. This simply consists of telling each ship in turn whether it should concentrate its firepower on ground fire support for the land forces or whether it should concentrate on defending the task force itself. Here is the first fault of the game. All the ships are said to have the same firepower available for the sake of simplicity and playability. I do not see why a more accurate evaluation of each ship's attack and defence potential (perhaps considered on a points basis) should have complicated matters for the player. Depending on how you select the balance of priorities, the task force's vul-



nerability to enemy air raids is altered. Because the gameplay concentrates on the land based forces, you just have to grin and bear it while the Argentinian forces attack your fleet.

Next, you have a choice of four possible landing sites for your forces. Two of your units (SBS and SAS Recce units) have the ability to carry out intelligence gathering missions at this point to select the best possible site. Sites available are Port Stanley, Uranie Bay, Cow Bay and San Carlos Bay, the historical site of the landings. Once a site has been selected, all future landings must take place their.

The entire play area is displayed at once, so following the progress of the battle is very straightforward indeed. The whole of the map is very clear with one exception: mountains. These are drawn in yellow on a green background making them extremely difficult to distinguish from the background. Incidentally, some of the text causes this problem as well, appearing as white or yellow on a green background and is quite hard to make out as a result. As some combat results are only shown briefly, this can be annoying. Units are displayed as single characters with only colour to differentiate between British and Argentinian units. This is not a problem however, as when a unit is being dealt with, its full identification and and combat status are displayed at the bottom of the screen.

Units have a number of factors which affect their ability to fight and move. AF is the aggression factor, the value set against another unit's DF (defence factor) to determine the outcome of combat. AF may be decreased but never increased. DF, on the other hand, may be increased if such details as terrain features prove favourable to the defending unit. MV is the movement factor, indicating the speed at which a unit may move. This may also be reduced by terrain. Lastly, RG is the range factor. Only artillery and armoured units may engage in ranged fire.

Ordering units is simplicity itself and is merely a question of following the prompts, Attack, Move, Pass, Recce (SBS and SAS only). Results of combat are displayed immediately. Depending on the weather, Air Support and Ship's Guns may be brought to bear on an enemy unit. However, for some reason, these options are available only after your ground unit has attacked the enemy. Again, I can see no reason why the game would become substantially more complex if the logical option of pre-emptive air strikes was given. It would avoid an unnecessary build up of casualties. To be fair, if a unit is ordered to attack an enemy group which is out of range, a message will point out this fact but still allow ranged missions from the task force to be carried out. This, I feel, is a clumsy and unnecessary way of getting around the problem.

Depending on the difficulty level set, the player must retake all ten settlements and hold them for one full turn afterwards. The enemy's air strikes will be random and may be intercepted by Sea Harriers on patrol. During the game, you have no control over this aspect of the game. The game makes use of zone of control and limited intelligence during play and sound effects are used to emphasise certain events.

Falklands '82 is definitely the beginner's game. It doesn't include helicopters (as the author decided their use would hopelessly unbalance the game) or logistics. Nor does it allow the player to experiment with choices the real task force commanders never had, like directing high level bomber strikes against the Argentinian mainland to reduce enemy air effectiveness. The result is a highly simplified game which is easy to complete successfully. It fails to offer a serious challenge and, whilst being good as far as it goes, ultimately fails to achieve its aims.

PRESENTATION 65%
Simple but satisfactory. Sometimes weak on the screen however
RULES 62%
Easy to use but some features are conspicuous by their absence
PLAYABILITY 64%
Well, it is quite playable, for all its faults . . .
GRAPHICS 60%
Nice map . . . shame about the units!
AUTHENTICITY 39%
Too many serious shortcomings to be rated higher
VALUE FOR MONEY 33%
Not enough there. Save a couple of pounds and buy a CCS game instead
OVERALL 33%
Everybody makes mistakes. This is PSS's

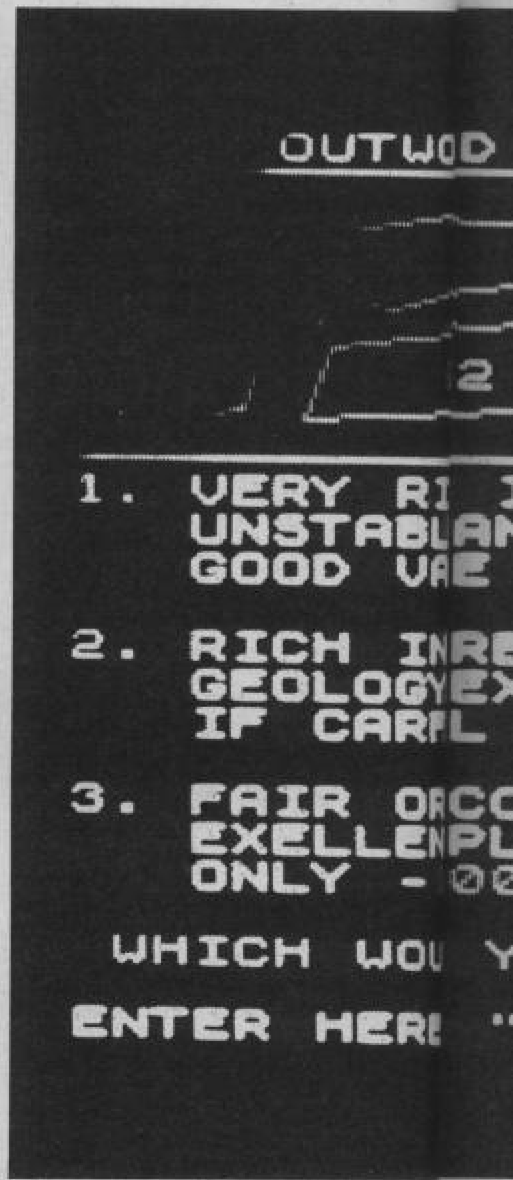
OUTWORLD

Producer: Sapphire Software
Price: **£1.99**
Author: P Davies

Sapphire Software's first product, *Outworld* is intended for the budget end of the market. It's a science fiction strategy game involving mining and trading on a planet called Outworld, hence the title. I can't comment on the packaging, as the review copy sent to me had nothing beyond a few, limited instructions and the cassette. So, to the game.

First of all, it is necessary to buy land before mining may commence and at the beginning of the game you have to stake a claim on one of three mining zones by purchasing a patch of land. They range from dangerous areas with massive ore reserves to relatively safe areas with few good mining prospects. Their price also varies — naturally the more expensive the mining rights, the better the ore deposits. Once a choice has been made, play progresses to the next screen.

At this point, a workforce needs to be recruited and a motley bunch they seem to be, too! A workforce consists of a couple of hundred weird looking aliens who possess even weirder names. No mention is made of their abilities but each belongs to a different union and union rules affect you later in the game. The workers demand different levels of pay as well, so economists should bear this in mind. Neither the union rules which individual workers follow nor their abilities are mentioned

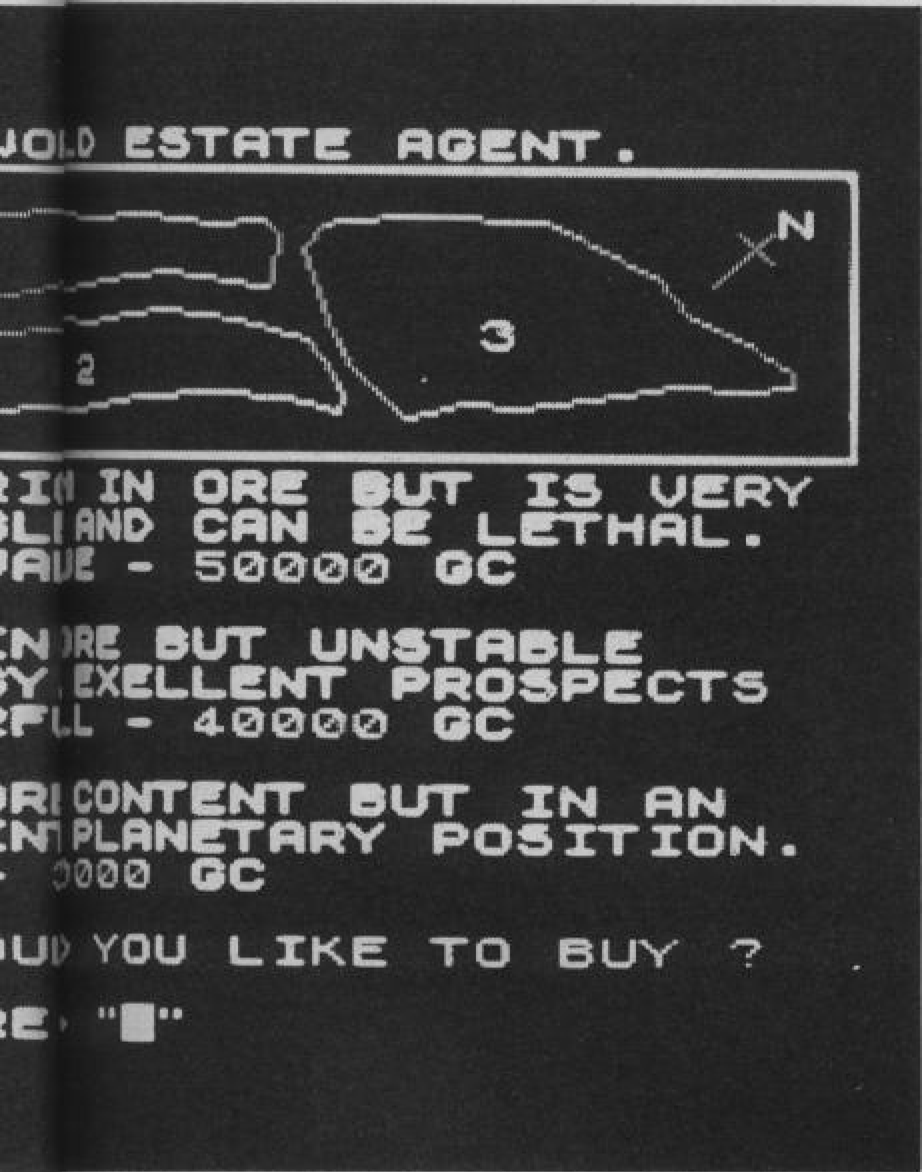


at the start, so it's hard to make a good decision first time around. Hopefully, when this game appears on the market, better instructions will be included that rectify this matter.

Equipment needs to be bought next. Again, there was no mention as to whether certain equipment is actually necessary for ore retrieval or whether it simply aids retrieval. In fact, the latter seems to be the case and the options cover heavy duty pickaxes, which are almost worthless, to mining machines, which I could never really afford as they are more expensive than opening up a new mine. This screen also allows old equipment to be sold, but beware, you're only likely to recoup a tiny proportion of the original price when selling equipment. After a couple of offers have been made, you will not have the opportunity to sell again until the next month's turn.

During the game, mining reports come in to tell you how things are going and opportunities arise to spend money with advertising companies or even mercenaries, who are prepared to harrass your competitors for a fee. Little else of use happens until the end of the month when the offers for your ore arrive and the banking reports are publish-

A good choice of land for your mining operation? Remember — sales men are con men!



ed. During the mining it's possible to alter the safety level at the workface, which is governed by a variable between one and ten. As might be expected, safer conditions cost more to implement.

No matter how safe you make the workface, it appears that one major disaster befalls the workforce every month! Normally a disaster results in the death of a couple of hundred workers owing to the collapse of a shaft and although these losses do not show on your workforce reports, compensation has to be paid out.

Inevitably, some of your workers misbehave. Every month a few of them decide to steal some ore — and they always get caught! Doing nothing is likely to make the situation even worse next month, so two other choices are possible. Firing the culprits and reclaiming the ore is one choice, but taking the culprits to courts is perhaps a better financial gamble as workers who are found guilty are fined 5,000 credits, which does wonders for your profitability.

If cash flow is a problem, you can ask for a loan. Going overdrawn is allowed and if you think the money will come in soon, then an overdraft may be the best course. Otherwise, a loan will cost you a small amount extra and can allow better investment in the mines (you could use the money to open up a new mine — but this would almost always entail adding to your workforce). The last way of saving money is by fiddling the taxman. Care has to be taken here. At the end of each month, the taxman declares how much you owe (calculated as a percentage of monthly turnover) but leaves you the option of deciding how much to pay. Too little, and he will simply take more than was originally asked for. Careful consideration of the problem can lead to significant savings.

Outworld flows nicely as a game and is far more flexible than many other trading games in terms of expenditure and company control but it is not without its faults. Mining may be dangerous but I feel there are far too many major disasters. The workforces are too predictable and do not vary enough in behaviour or ability. Fiddling the taxman is probably the best feature of the game. Unfortunately, I still felt stifled by the game's limitations in the same way as with many others of this type. Having said that, if you're into trading games then this can only be considered as one of the better ones.

PRESENTATION 55%
Plenty of options but sometimes a bad choice of colours makes them difficult to read
RULES 30%
Those received with the game were definitely below par — perhaps this will not be the case with the release version?
PLAYABILITY 70%
Despite other flaws, the game is still playable
GRAPHICS 48%
Some amusing graphics in an otherwise text dominated game
AUTHENTICITY 47%
As trading games go, not bad really. Still too stifling to have a truly authentic feel, however
VALUE FOR MONEY 72%
Considering the low cost of the game and the fact that it is quite playable (for a while, at least) it should be worth it for those who like this kind of game
OVERALL 58%
Nearly hit the mark. Not for me but still better than many others of this type

A DIFFERENT KIND OF WARFARE

Taking his British Rail timetable in hand, SEAN MASTERSON stumps off in the direction of Poynton to find out what MC Lothlorien are up to nowadays.

The name **MC Lothlorien** has been synonymous with good strategy wargames for a few years now. The company itself began life with the arrival of the Spectrum. Roger Lees and Mike Cohen, old school friends with a passion for wargaming, started writing games on the ZX81 and selling them by mail order as a hobby. By the time Clive Sinclair launched his rubber-keyed computer, the hobby had expanded to the point where Mike and Roger had to take it seriously. Thus MC Lothlorien was born as the two trading companies run by Mike and Roger, **MC Associates** and **Lothlorien**, amalgamated.

Mike and Roger started writing strategy wargames, and as their company grew the product range diversified to include arcade games released under the **Actionmaster** label. After a while, Lothlorien's decided to concentrate on strategy games and arcade action faded into the background. Recent developments, however, may lead to some very different products indeed.

Mike's particular wargaming interest is focussed on the Ancient period and he has an entire Macedonian army to prove it! Roger has a keen interest in the American Civil War and has been involved in several simulations of battles from this era. But their interest doesn't stop with 'toy' soldiers. Computer simulations and wargames produced by companies such as SPI and Avalon Hill have led to many late nights. *Trireme* is a particular favourite — a game in which the player controls ancient navies, manoeuvering immense galleons and boarding enemy vessels. Mike and Roger's enthusiasm for the genre is evident, and carries through into their business lives.

Nowadays the two founding

partners have more than enough to keep them busy with running their company, with Mike acting as Managing Director and Roger taking on the Marketing responsibility. They are aided and abetted by two secretaries, Arline and Helen, who complete the administrative team, and nowadays programming is left to in-house teams and freelances.

In some respects, running a software house successfully over a period of years is like playing a huge strategy game — Mike and Roger find the analogy quite fitting. In the past they have had a few close shaves, and admit as much, but now feel that they have learned from these. There's little doubt that Lothlorien will be around for a few years more.

Back in May last year, the company entered into a contract with Argus Press Software, under which Argus takes care of the marketing and distribution effort for some of Lothlorien's new products. "We have some very good games", Mike explained, "and felt that we couldn't really do them full justice, so we entered into a contract with Argus, to take advantage of their marketing and distribution expertise". So far this partnership has worked well — *The Bulge* was the first game to be put onto the market by Argus, followed by *Arena*.

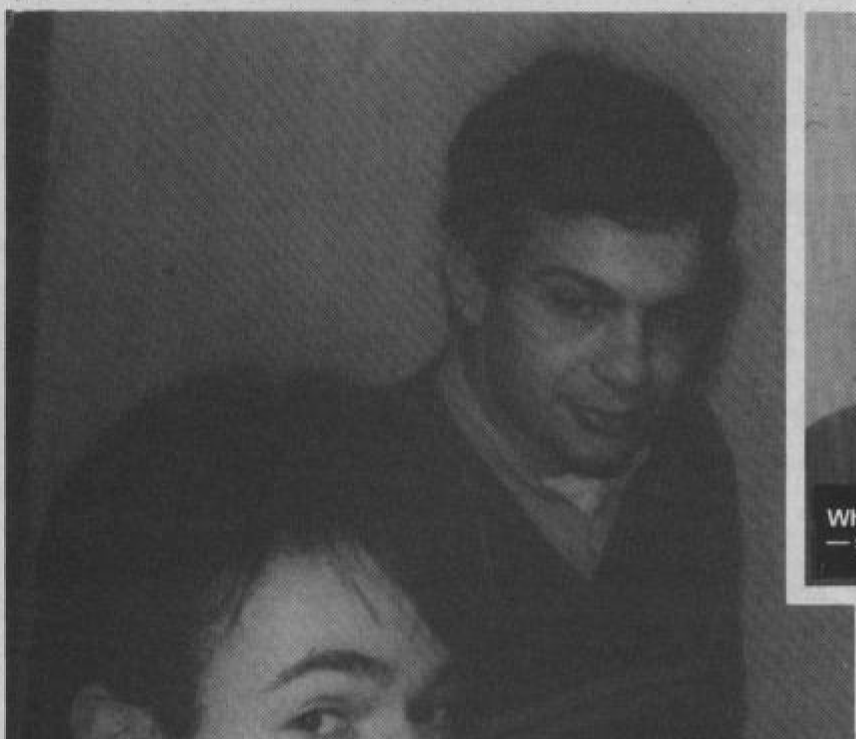


Roger Lees (left) and Mike Cohen — started with an interest in history and the Sinclair ZX81.

A N' F Software is another company which has a similar marketing deal with Argus, and Roger and Mike are teaming up with Doug Anderson and Martin Hickling of A 'N' F to form a third company. All the in-house programmers will soon be moved to new premises in Prestwich to form a game development company by the name of **Starsoft UK Ltd.** Five teams of programmers will be working on separate projects at any one time, as well as individual freelance coders. "We felt we should do something new", Mike said "so a third company has been set up with A N' F. They have the technical expertise while we have game designing skills which are complimentary." By making the best of Lothlorien's strategy acumen and A 'N' F's arcade abilities some exciting hybrid games could be developed.



While the men do battle, the women keep the home fires burning — secretaries Helen (left) and Arline.



Dave Selwood (left) and Peter Carmpouloni are two of Lothlorien's in-house programming team.

Peter Carmpouloni and Dave Selwood are the in-house programmers currently working on an animated adventure called *Stellar Holocaust* which is being produced for Argus. Pete is the main man on the Spectrum version. Both have had plenty of previous experience in programming: Peter wrote the adventure *Time Sanctuary* on the Spectrum but his career goes back to the days of the ill-fated **Red Shift** for whom he wrote *City of Death* with his brother, George; Dave is an ex-Ocean man with several titles under his belt including *Mr Wimpy*, *Rollerball*, *Caterpillar* (on the Vic 20) and *Road Frog*. *Stellar Holocaust* should be appearing around March/April time according to the Production Manger at Argus, and it could not be more different from any of Pete and Dave's previous projects — it's a sort of *Lords of Midnight* in space type game . . .

Lothlorien have a number of projects underway, and will continue to write and release strategy wargames on their own account, independently of the Starsoft UK set-up. *Borodino* should arrive some time after *Stellar Holocaust* and continues the saga of Napoleon's attack on Russia in the nineteenth century. This game's features will include the regrouping of units and the use of artillery, the absence of which attracted some criticism for *Waterloo*.

Lothlorien feel that their games might not always hit the top ten, but they do have an incredibly long life span — they also know that keeping up with the market is fundamental to the success of anyone in a business which has seen the downfall of so many companies over just a few years. Mike Cohen and Roger Lees seem suitably equipped to cater for the future. The best form of defence is attack, and Lothlorien seem ready to make theirs . . .

FRONTLINE



FORUM

BUSINESS SENSE . . .

Dear Sean
Thank you for reviewing my game, *Just Imagine . . .* in the February edition of CRASH: it makes a very interesting change reading somebody else's review of your own game rather than your own review of somebody else's game! On the whole, I think that your review was very fair, however, I was surprised to find that you seemed to have missed out on one very crucial point: the game is a strategy game.

You say that it is rather hard to get beyond the first month and that mainly for this reason, the game has little lasting appeal. If this were true, I would be the last one to play the game, let alone try and sell it. There is a certain strategy, broadly speaking, that you have to discover (in fact it is pure business sense) and if you use this, you should do rather more than simply pass the first month. Most of the game's features only come out at later stages in the game, specifically to give the player something to aim towards. So (if you do get past the first month) I feel the game does have lasting interest — having reviewed goodness knows how many games myself. This was one of my main aims for *Just Imagine . . .* since all too many games are five-minute wonders. The accompanying manual gives what I hope are fairly clear ideas on how to make progress without 'giving the game away.'

Your point about knowing you are bankrupt and having to go through several screens before you can restart is also a fair one — except that there is a quit option once a month. Failing that, trying to break out of the game at any stage returns you to the title screen and you can recommence playing from there, without wasting any time.

Those two moans aside, the review was more than fair, but I felt these ought to be pointed out because, if you were right, there would be little point in buying the game, which would be a shame — not least because I feel it would be an enjoyable experience, especially as you progress and see the full extent of the parody of our hilarious industry.

David Lester
Pinner, Middlesex

The reason why I moaned about the relative difficulty in getting beyond the hurdle of the first month's business is simply because it is not accurate. No matter what the financial state of a small company is, unless it was set up in March (a particularly bad move), it is unlikely to be declared bankrupt before a six to twelve month period has elapsed simply because of the speed at which the business world operates. All small companies have debts when they start out, and any competent businessman will be able to temper the bank's concern about these for a while. I was aware that the game was both a strategy and a parody but felt that this point affected the suspension of disbelief so necessary to this kind of game.

On the point about being able to restart and quit, I admit to having been unaware of the options available. That would indeed make the game less tiresome if difficulties were encountered. Thanks for pointing them out.

SM

CRITICAL ACUMEN?

Dear Sir
As the author of *Waterloo* and *Austerlitz*, I was intrigued to find that in your review of *Waterloo* I was coming in for some criticism with regard to the comanders named in the game. The changes, such as Marshall Ney being reduced to the level of a corps commander are in fact, forced upon me by the structure of the program and none of them are pure mistakes.

For an example of genuine inaccuracy, a letter from a Mr Howie of Manchester sent to me via Lothlorien pointed out that Lobau commanded the 6th corps at Waterloo, which is indeed true. He then stated, 'I do not know who Mouton, your 6th corps commander is.'

I refrained from informing Mr Howie that General Mouton is, or rather was, the Count of Lobau. Why is it that the most vociferous criticism seems to come from those with the least knowledge?

Ken Wright
Sheffield

To be fair, I think the points being made by the people who criticised the review and the game were really based upon more important details than commanders' names. Several people criticised the lack of artillery, for example. However, many of the critics felt that once a weak point could be found in a game, it gave them carte blanche to proceed to annihilate the rest of the game. Apart from the fact that this is a shortsighted and harmful approach, there is always the danger of falling down on your own ignorance.

SM

A TIPSTER WRITES

Dear Sean,
I am delighted to see that you have started a FRONTLINE FORUM but why stop here? I think it would also be an excellent idea to start a FRONTLINE Hints & Tips (or should I say Strategy and Tactics) section, as at present CRASH does not cater for clues on strategy and wargames at all. To start off, I have offered some strategic advice for *Arnhem* which I think is the best wargame for the Spectrum at present (although I haven't seen *Waterloo* or *Austerlitz* yet). I've completed the game on all levels without the loss of a single unit.

These tips are for scenario Three (though they usually work on Five as well) — apart from scenario Four, Three is the most interesting. The most obvious way to play is to land all the American paras left at Nijmegen and the British paras around Arnhem. Unfortunately, the British paras are not strong enough to hold Arnhem on their own and have usually been pushed back over the Rhine by the time the British armour arrives. The key to this game is that no German unit can cross a major river other than by bridge. Therefore I land all the British units around Arnhem as usual but also land most of the American units at the points where the German units usually enter the map so they can be destroyed before they gather in strength. The remaining two or three units should be dropped on the right side of Nijmegen. This strategy is equally effective against computer and human opponents as long as the allies hold the point between the two main rivers.

Finally, I have included some points which I think should be made part of all wargames. First, there should either be different levels of play, or else the player should be able to change the victory conditions, as a computer opponent can become too easy to beat. Secondly, terrain should have different effects on movement and fighting values for differing types of units. Some areas on the map should be virtually impassable to help players best decide on how to position their troops. This will allow infantry to become particularly useful in certain types of terrain. Thirdly, units should possess a number of factors that combine to make the ovrall fighting value. Finally, every game should have a non real-time order phase to give players time to think and a real-time movement phase in which both players move their units simultaneously to add realism. It would be impractical for firing phases to be realtime though.

C Francombe
Swansea

Thanks for the Arnhem tips. Let's have some more from other FRONTLINE readers. Some of your suggestions about necessary elements of wargames include those which every wargamer would like to see. However, the idea of simultaneous, realtime movement poses several problems, not least of which is the sheer inconvenience when two human players are participating and the possible limitations caused by the size of the map compared to that of the screen. Does anybody else have views on this?

SM

That's all we have space for this month, but keep your letters, and indeed tips, coming to FRONTLINE FORUM, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB. Who knows, if the response is good enough, I might even be able to persuade Graeme to let me give away some software for the best letter or tip each month . . .

LLOYD MANGRAM'S HALL OF SLIME

A double dose of Slimesters this issue, and a rather less pretty bunch that usual if I may say so. I suppose we really ought to put Robin Candy in the Hall of Slime, now he's succeeded in getting his own logo AND his own supplement in CRASH. Mind you, we'd have to knock a few walls down to fit a picture of him in!

Keep your High Scores rolling in peoples — we could do with seeing a few more female slimesters. All I seem to receive are pictures of ugly mug boys.



Raid over Moscow Completed 328,750 on hard
Robin of the Wood Completed
Critical Mass Completed
Dragontorc Completed, 100% Supreme Lorelord
Highway Encounter Completed
Rambo Completed
Starquake Completed, 61%
Dun Darach Completed
Lord of the Rings killed at the ford
Everyone's a Wally Completed
Pyjamarama Completed
Atic Atac Completed
Android 2 Completed 3 times in a row
Way of the Exploding Fist 9th Dan
Commando 3rd Area
Richard Wilkinson, Bisley, Surrey.

Chequered Flag 1.03.12 Monza
Psst flower blossomed 3 times, 740,035
Tranz Am Collected all 8 cups
Wild Bunch 39%
World Cup Football 4-0 in the Final
Cyclone 1,000
Frank Bruno Ravioli Mafiosi
Graham Baptie, Otley, West Yorkshire.

Knight Lore 33%
Chequered Flag Brand's Hatch 1:10:98; Silverstone 1:06:00; Cambridge Ring 0:57:69
Pyramid well over 73,000,9th level
Scrabble defeated levels 1, 2 and 3.
R Blackie, Warwick Square, London.

Manic Miner Completed
Jet Pac 1,370,335
Airwolf 4 scientists freed
Hunchback Completed
Bruce Lee Completed
Pogo 141,000
J Blackwell, Anstey, Leicester

Ghostbusters £70,200
Frank Bruno's Boxing Frenchie
Spy Hunter 128,200
Travels with Trashman £1,024, died in Madrid
Beach Head 95,200
Booty 43 pieces
Manic Miner The Warehouse
Atic Atac 89% Completed
Frankie Goes to Hollywood almost completed, 93% a real person
Match Point Final won 6 4, 6 2, 6 4
Daley Thompson's Decathlon Day 1 164,695; Day 2 65,855; 100m 9.64; long jump 8.40; shot putt 29.74; high jump 2.39; 400m 32.10; 110m hurdles 8.94; javelin 110.24; discus 76.32; pole vault 4.90; 1500m 90.75
Hypersports swimming 5.22; skeet shooting 9,200; long horse 9.99; archery 4,000; triple jump 16.00; weight lifting Middle Heavy
Spy vs Spy 9,024 Grandmaster Spy
Finder's Keepers about £824.00
Gary Rason, Randolph Gardens, London.

Frank Bruno Frenchie Ko'd 5 Times
Match Day beat all levels
Match Point beat computer on 2nd level
Football Manager Cup 5 Times, Champion twice
Airwolf 3 scientists
Jet Set Willy II Completed
Exploding Fist 6th DAN
Atic Atac 60%
Pyramid Completed
Kokotoni Wilf Completed
Craig Wood, West Heath, Birmingham.

Spy vs Spy Grandmaster Spy
Booty 121 pieces of Booty
Underwurlde Completed, Mire Mare exit 83%
Alien 8 21 Chambers
Exploding Fist equivalent to 70th DAN
Fighting Warrior 65,470
Lunar Jetman found Trailer, took 5 hours
Bruce Lee Completed 35 Times
Kokotoni Wilf Completed
Fred 5th Pyramid
Shaun Macleod, Torquay, South Devon.

Commando 117,150
Spy Hunter 338,285
Buck Rodgers 340,000
Bryan O' Rourke, Ullapool, Scotland.

Mikie round the whole game twice
Nodes of Yesod 37%
Rocky Horror Show Completed
Way of the Exploding Fist 6th DAN
Football Manager Division One
Jonathan Kaye, Loughborough, Leicestershire.

Frank Bruno's Boxing beaten Frenchie
Spy Hunter 385,277
Bruce Lee Completed 16 times
Ghostbusters Completed
Kokotoni Wilf Completed
Atic Atac found all parts of key
Booty 60 objects
Yie Ar Kung Fu 30th stage
Jet Set Willy 66 objects
Graham Probets, Richmond, Surrey.

Yie Ar Kung Fu stage 30, 299,000
Hypersports 156,000
D.T.S. Supertest 57,000 Day 1; 61,000 Day 2
World Series Baseball 59-1 to me
Sabre Wulf Completed
Everyone's a Wally Completed
Herbert's Dummy Run Completed
Finder's Keepers Completed
Three Weeks in Paradise 6% solved
Commando Completed Area 4
James Gordon, Watton-At-Stone, Hertfordshire.

Commando 299,100 Area 10
Moon Cresta 30,100
Starquake Completed
Bruce Lee Done 7 Times
Jet Pac 125,600
Stop The Express stopped train twice
Airwolf 3 scientists
Pyjamarama Completed
Mikie 90,600
Ian Philipps, Stratford on Avon, Warwickshire.

Bruce Lee Completed (13 times)
Atic Atac Completed
Fallguy Completed
Underwurlde Completed
Pyjamarama Completed
Jetpac Completed
Matchday final won 11-1
Football Manager rating 99% on expert
Nightshade 1%
Ian Donohoe, Burnley, Lancashire.

Winter Games ski jump 225.3 points; hot dog 10 points; speed skating 37.4 seconds; figure skating 2.4 points; biathlon 214 seconds; bobsleigh 25.84 seconds; free skating 6.4 points
Match Day Beat computer on all levels, Amateur 13.0, Pro 12.0, International 11.1 (5minutes)
World Series Baseball Beat computer 34.1 in 3 innings (easy level)
Commando Broke area two on 46,400
Rambo 19,700
Football Manager 100% straight to first division (won F.A. cup)
Atic Atac 98% Complete
Pyjamarama 90% Complete
Gunfright £44,895 (Lone Ranger No. 12)
Knight Lore 79% Complete
Underwurlde 24% Complete
Sabre Wulf 100% Complete
Alien 8 Complete
Three Weeks In Paradise 42%
Paul Ellis and Jeff Hillman, Brighton, Sussex.

Yie Ar Kung Fu 317,000 Level 40
Nodes of Yesod 50%
Exploding Fist 10th Dan,102,000
Dambusters dam destroyed on fair
Highway Encounter Zone O,23,000
Beach Head Completed
Fighting Warrior 95,000
Jet Set Willy 2 70 objects
Pyjamarama 83%
Automania 6 Cars Completed
Blue Thunder Completed
Bruce Lee Killed Wizard 7 times and stopped with 7 lives still left.
Frankie Goes To Hollywood 98%
Nightshade Killed 2 Nasties 55%
Mark Hewes, Canvey Island, Essex.

Baseball won on all levels
Exploding Fist 10th Dan
Sabre Wulf Completed
Underwurlde Completed
Stop the Express Stopped
Frank Sor'ee, Emmes, Holland.

Atic Atac Completed
Baseball beat computer on all levels
Beach Head Completed on all levels
Bruce Lee Completed 4 times
Finder's Keepers Completed
Ghostbusters Completed to 55,500
Harrier Attack Completed
Jet Set Willy Completed
Kong Completed
Krakatoa 6 Survived 6 raids (13,088)
Manic Miner Completed
Raid over Moscow Completed on all levels
Sabre Wulf Completed 94%, 105,270
The Rocky Horror Show Completed, 12 time periods left
Saboteur Completed
Yie Ar Kung Fu Completed once
Impossible Mission four letters of the password and 8,000 points
Brendan Woodhouse, Hebburn, Tyne & Wear.

Airwolf 2 Scientists
Football Manager Top of 1st division
Manic Miner Completed
Jet Set Willy 43 pieces
Bruce Lee 434,425 Killed wizard 8 times
Match Day Won 14-0 in final
Frank Bruno's Boxing Completed
Ground Attack Completed 4th level
Gary Webster, Crewe, Cheshire.

Bruce Lee 980,240 Killed wizard 17 times
Beach Head Completed
Raid Over Moscow Completed
Hypersports Swimming 25.9; Skeet 9200; Horse 9.90; Archery 4000; Weights 210kg; Triple Jump 17.22
Stonkers Thrashed at all levels
Harrier Attack 42,000 (level 5)
JN Hant, Little Eaton, Derby.

Rocky Horror Completed
Football Manager Completed
Beach Head Completed 100,000
Raid Over Moscow Completed 212,000
Pyjamarama 67%
Match Day 4-1 in finals
Kung-Fu Brown Belt
Exploding Fist 10th dan 207,000
Kokotoni Wilf Completed
Fall-Guy Completed
Bruce Lee Completed 7 times
Night Gunner Mission 13 12,560
Formula One Champion on 3rd level
Match Point Won in semi-final
Jorge A. F. Carvalho, Viila Nova De Gaia

Exploding Fist 10th dan 181,600
Airwolf 2 scientists
Finders Keepers Completed
Hyper Sports Swimming 25.86; Skeet 8.900; Vault 9.99; Archery 3,260; Triple Jump 15.0; Weights 150kg
S. Chan, Marston Green, Birmingham.

Spy Hunter 734,594
PSST Last level
Starquake 19% 46,595
Supertest Day 1 Skeet 4,300; Cycling 35.32; Diving 52; Slalom Can't complete
Day 2 Canoeing 25.08; Penalties 4,110; Ski Jump 8,250;
Knight Lore 9 charms 85%
Sabre Wulf Completed 87%
Pyjamarama Completed 89%
Benjie Rushmore, Halesowen, West Mids.

Harrier Attack Completed 26,550
Bruce Lee 220,675, wizard killed 3 times
Sabre Wulf Completed 84%
Alchemist Warlock killed twice
Helichopper Completed 15,780
DT's Supertest Shooting 5.100; Cycling 33.25; Diving 89; Slalom 54.09
Day 2 Rowing 25.02; Penalties 4,905; Ski Jump 85.50m; Tug O War 6th man beaten
Paul Davis, Kingswood, Bristol.

Hyper Sports Completed all events 8 times
Grand National 3rd
Exploding Fist 10th dan
Knight Lore Completed
Kung Fu Black Belt level 6
Jet Set Willy Completed
Frank Bruno Completed
Bruce Lee 8th level
Cookie Made cake
Sabre Wulf Completed
James Miles, Felixstowe

Exploding Fist Past 10th dan 5 times
Bruce Lee Killed wizard 11 times
Tir na nog Completed
Dun Darach Completed
Marsport M. Central approach 93% complete; Entry to Sanctum 49% complete
Kokotoni Wilf Completed
Alien 8 22 chambers
Knight Lore 8 charms
Frank Bruno Beaten Frenchie
Spy vs Spy Grand Master spy
Skool Daze Got report
Underwurlde Completed
Wizard's Lair 4 pieces of lion but failed to escape
Sabre Wulf Completed
Ad Astra Castor Station
Airwolf 1 scientist
Roland's Rat Race Completed
Nightshade Killed three nasties
Nathen (I never use POKES) Booth

Deathstar Interceptor 24,600
Dukes of Hazzard 8,023
Exploding fist 10th dan
Hellfire 6,540
Hobbit Completed
Match Day International 7-0
Monty on the Run 650
Nightshade 32,000
Pole Position 40,300 3rd
Raid Over Moscow 75,400
Shadow of Unicorn 51%
Spy Hunter327,020
Spy vs Spy Quite a sly spy
Michael Reynolds, Bryn Wigan

Atic Atac Completed 93% 25,075
Automania 9,416 5th car
The Biz Completed No 1
Booty 90 treasures
DTs Decathlon 100m 9.46s; L Jump 87.04m; Shot 25.08m; H Jump 2.43m; 400m 31.82s; 110m 12.04s; Pole Vault 5.04m; Discus 75.90m; Javelin 111.56m; 1500m 113.79s
Pyjamarama 87% Completed
Turmoil 2,650 level 1
Chris Moss

DT's Supertest Day 2 81,331
Street Hawk 21,030
Fighting Warrior 42,500
WS Basketball 25-4 level 4
Impossible Mission 3,000
Critical Mass 49,000
Starquake 58,660 — 30%
Adam Liversage, Solihull, West Mids

Tapper Space Bar
Star Strike 3D 1,118,330 — level 9
Beach Head Completed 299,000
Spy Hunter 750,270 Expert
Lords of Midnight Completed
Atic Atac 47%
Sabre Wulf Completed 93%
Booty 107 objects
Chequered Flag Cambridge Ring
Exploding Fist 10th dan 172,000
Football Manager 100% and did the double
Rocky 3rd boxer beaten
Buck Rogers 50,000
Mugsy 3,470
Steve Davis Snooker 42 break
Knightlore 48%
Kokotoni Wilf Completed
Frankie 57%
Minder £3,255
Decathlon 100m 8.77s; Shot Putt 32m; H Jump 2.65m; 400m 32s; 110 14s; Vault 5.50m; Discus 83m; Javelin 98m; 1500m 366s
Alan Hopley, Worthington, Sussex



THE MESSIANIC APPROACH TO COMPUTER SOFTWARE

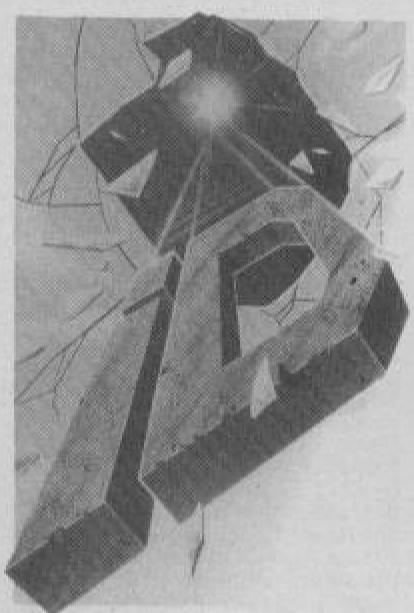
Or the Software Gospel according to Croucher . . .

Last month we took a look at a game which appears on CRL's New Wave label. It grew from an initial concept devised by Clement Chambers and was programmed under Mr Croucher's conceptual eye by Colin Jones. This month we take a look at the man who acted as midwife to ID and who is assisting in the development of Darkness At Dawn, **and adventure which employs sound and light rather than text input.**

Since leaving Automata Mel Croucher has been planning for the future. He feels the software industry is going to have to change it approach radically over the next few years as technology advances. Sitting next to him in a London pub, hemmed in between a fruit machine on one side and a jukebox on the other, GRAEME KIDD learnt a little about Mr Croucher's view of software, the advent of devices that will allow videodiscs to be interfaced to home computers and the potential they have for revolutionising entertainment . . .

▶ Mel Croucher has been involved in the home computer software business pretty much since it started — with Christian Penfold he founded Automata which gave birth to the PiMan. They refused to be involved with games that featured mindless murder of pixels, and consistently released games which were different to those produced by the mega-combines which dominate the industry today. His most ambitious project to date is DEUS EX MACHINA — an entertainment involving a soundtrack synchronised to the on screen action. DEUS is much more than a game — and has been dubbed as a piece of software ahead of its time. Now ID has been released.

Clement Chambers, the bossman at CRL, is the person who first dreamt up the idea which



finally surfaced as a computer program called *ID*. He had been toying with the possibilities of launching some totally different software and jotted his thoughts about a particular concept involving artificial intelligence on the back of a grubby envelope.

This envelope found its way to Mel Croucher who agreed to develop the concept a little further with programmer Colin Jones. Once you load *ID* you find a personality inside your computer who has a mysterious past and a total lack of trust in you and the outside world. It is your task to converse with ID, taking into account its changing moods and moments of fear and jubilation as you try to draw out its secrets.

ID-EOLOGICAL STANCE◀

ID is very different to the normal run of games software and is the first new release that has involved Mr Croucher for more than twelve months. "It has never been particularly attractive for me to play safe", Mel explains, "and when Clem contacted me with an embryonic idea I was attracted to it because it is using computers for what in my opinion they should be used for — to stimulate. It doesn't matter whether the micro stimulates tears, laughter or whatever, a reaction is important. If New Wave can achieve that, more power to it, because nobody else is doing much in that direction."

ID is perhaps Mel Croucher's second public step on a path towards using computers in a very different way. Since leaving Automata (on April Fool's Day last year — a joker to the end) Mel has spent months travelling round Europe, meeting hardware manufacturers and learning what's likely to be available in the next couple of years. He's impressed by what he has seen, and the possibilities that will open up in the near future for new kinds of software: "Five, six years ago the concepts were much bigger than the machines, much bigger. I wanted to do *Deus Ex Machina* on the 1K ZX81 . . . now the concepts are piffling compared with the hardware we've got available. There's no memory restriction any more, there are ways you can get around that no problem at all. Graphical definition is getting pretty good, as is the capability to reproduce sound. Now the concepts are trailing behind the hardware — the hardware isn't even on the shelves yet, but it's there; it's ready now but no-one's launching yet. We're just on the threshold of a beautiful new toyshop."

NEW CONCEPTS◀

Mr Croucher is cagey when it comes to revealing details of the projects he's currently working on — but they are firmly placed in the future. "I've been working very hard since I left Automata, and if anything comes to fruition I'll be happy to talk about it when I'm convinced that it's going to work." He explains his reticence: "One of the faults of this business — indeed of any business really — is hype. I just don't want to be guilty of saying I'm working on something really great and then it doesn't happen." It's clear, however, that Mel Croucher's plans involve much more than conventional games.

"The days of passive entertainment are over," he explains, "for the past five hundred years human entertainment has been passive. Unless you are actually on the stage or playing in the football team, all received entertainment is passive. If you read a book then you can't affect the plot — you can start at the back page and work forwards, but then you are an idiot! If you watch a film, it's even worse because you are given the images and you can't even think up the images for yourself. And so on.

"With the advent of the computer things changed for the first time since Gutenberg printed that first bible — the reason I go back five hundred years to Gutenberg is because that was mass entertainment. Before that bible was printed entertainment was spoken and you had folk tales and songs and the audience could participate. They could either change the story when they told it on, or join in the choruses and so on; it was active to a certain extent.

"Home micros allow entertainment to become active again. you can participate and whatever you do affects the final outcome, hopefully."

REAP AS YOU SOW◀

In some respects, *Deus Ex Machina* is recursive in that it goes back on itself — you have

to go through it several times before you can actually start to play it. There are a lot of levels in *Deus* and it's easy to take the program as a set piece which doesn't actually change. "You get out of it what you put in", Mel continues, "that was the primary motivation for *Deus* and has got a lot to do with *ID* — what you get out of it is what you put in — that's what's going to happen next in entertainment"

Mel explains what ID is intended to be: "I hope there are a number of levels. At its simplest level the program should be the verbal equivalent of Geoff Minter's *Psychadelia* — it will just burble along, generating phrases which should entertain people at parties for instance. That's if you give it nothing at all, if you don't contribute. At its most optimistic level, in my terms, if you ever get through the game and achieve total trust then ID will have learned from you — and don't lie to it, if you lie to it then you are only lieing to yourself — then it will, I hope, reflect aspects of your own personality that you weren't aware of before. In the best possible case you'll want to play it all over again, to do it better next time."

"There's a lot of humour in *ID* which you can actually get into. I've got a lot of experience of being in the wrong place at the right time and vice versa to draw upon, and a lot of it has to come through. It's the humour of despair almost. Can your readers read French? 'Si je ne rire pas je pleurerai' — never a better line written in French. If I didn't laugh I'd cry and so be it. Let's all laugh. I don't see anything funny at all about shooting things down, killing people and all that. I find things extremely funny in terms of wordplay or soundplay or concept play, that can be hilarious. With *ID* you can make such a total tit of yourself either by lying to it or by contradicting yourself later on, it'll remember and if you start changing your mind it'll start losing trust. Some of the wordplays are not as daft as they would appear to be. If *ID* starts saying 'Mummy is the root of all evil' it's not an accident — he means it, because you've told him something about your own mother, perhaps. So it's got those links in it."

"There's a game in there, in discovering 'Who is ID?' Nine little games, for the nine individual previous incarnations and one big one. If you want to play a game, you've got a game there but there's also something else . . ."

BYE BYE PIMAN◀

The association with CRL which led to ID's release goes back to an early Microfair where Mr Croucher bought a very youthful Clement Chambers his first pint of beer! In those days, the pink suited PiMan, star of *PiMania*, made regular appearances at ZX Microfairs, often accompanied by Mel wearing weird and wonderful costumes, and was the star of a comic strip which adorned the back page of Popular Computer Weekly. But the PiMan is no more: just before we met Mr Croucher, he had written the PiMan's obituary in his weekly gossip column in a trade paper. Why?

"Because whatever happens to the PiMan in the future, whether he re-emerges under a different guise or with a different owner, my personal involvement has ceased. Even after leaving Automata last April and the Popular Computing Weekly strip had ended, Christian Penfold, Robin who draws the cartoons, and I would regularly get together over a gallon of beer and poke three fingers up at the industry between us in the weekly comic strip in Computer Trade Weekly — some of which were spectacular.

"It's interesting that Clem in his office upstairs has the final strip from Popular Computing Weekly — 'Whatever happened to the Piman, Daddy?' — on the wall. And I've been to a number of offices over the past year where that has been on the wall. It meant quite a lot to me. The comic strip delivered some really spectacular prods at the industry. The PiMan was a cynical child who never grew up . . . or a cynical old man who never grew up, they're the same thing. The way that the industry has evolved it can only be static. He had his day, I'm very grateful to him — thank you very much — I did okay by him and he did okay by me. So yes, I mourn his passing and look forward to tomorrow."

SENSELESS VIOLENCE◀

Speaking both personally and through the PiMan, Mel Croucher has always held strong views about shoot 'em ups: "I find violent games very unpleasant for a number of reasons. Firstly they are pathetically inadequate, because the characters depicted are still awfully basic — just pixels — and the sounds generated are squeaks and beeps and the end product has nothing to with *Friday 13th* or *Rambo*, absolutely nothing. They are dressing up hackneyed ideas. That's my first objection. Secondly, they are totally derivative. I think the computers that we have now offer tremendous freedom of expression for any concept. Thirdly I think they are socially destructive. I've been saying it for years and people are very bored with me saying it like that but I think it is very dangerous to encourage young people to believe that winning is to do with killing. I think that's extremely dangerous. We have a new generation coming who will have no qualms whatsoever about pulling the trigger in any circumstance."

Strongly held opinions indeed, but more importantly Mel feels that the software industry has gone stale. There are only two basic types of game in the world from which all other games derive, he believes: games that have their roots in chess, involving strategy and so on which require the player to apply intellect, and reaction games in which you respond to what you see. Most of the established games and puzzles, like Draughts, Chess, Towers of Hanoi and so on were converted to home micros a long time ago. The software industry is growing stale, he feels:

"The hardware gets better. The software gets better. There's a lot of good software around at the moment; it's never been so good in fact but things move on. It's derivative, it's all derivative. The programming is superb now but the concepts are all stale. It's all very well to sign mega deals and licence various things — either buying licences or selling licences — but at the end of the day we are down to the programmer, who in turn relies on the concept. It's great to say 'I've come up with the greatest thing since sliced bread', but sliced bread goes off after a day." "I stole that line from someone, by the way", Mel adds, smiling.

Software houses tend to follow each other's lead — once one Karate game has come onto the market, several versions follow. For each 'new' type of game, several clones follow. Arcade conversions are becoming increasingly important in the list of new releases. It's all derivative and lacking in originality according to Mr Croucher . . .

"Last year I was in the company of a very large and well-known software house wherein the man was dressed in a grey three piece suit looking worried, and his PR boys and girls were all very well turned out, plying people with this, that and the other, and the structure was a wonderful pack of cards. Who wrote the programs? In they came, like the seven dwarves. These little children came in and were given a shandy or something. The whole company stood or fell on what these little kids could turn out. When I say kids, I mean kids — we were talking to fourteen or fifteen year old programmers. They can only be derivative — it is impossible for them to come up with an original idea, absolutely impossible — for even if they do, they haven't got the vocabulary to express it.

PASSING OVER THE BUCK◀

Mr Croucher's approach to writing software for computers doesn't involve making a fast buck. His prime motivation is not money — he gets involved because he wants to, because he loves it. "I just want to entertain people", he asserts, "the mechanism of the computer is just like a blank sheet of paper or an empty reel of recording tape or a set of tap dancing shoes. It's just a vehicle to entertain and to make people cry and laugh. There are no deep philosophical messages, I just want to entertain. In the sense of the cinema, you can entertain and make people cry or laugh, or instill some emotion: I want to do that with computers. In the past I've been involved with radio, music, the written word and so on. For the first time it all comes together. It's totally different this time round."

"I don't like what is happening — I'm very unhappy about computers and their effect on us. I'd much rather people spoke, sung or made music — it's a lot more valid for the people concerned. Whatever I'm doing in the future I would hope I can beat the pornographers and the men of violence to using the new technology — because they're going to come in, no matter what happens, because their prime motivation is the fast buck. They're going to make a fortune out of the new technology — with customised pornography or whatever."

Despite being voted program of the year in the Computer Trade Association's annual awards and despite collecting almost universal acclaim, *Deus Ex Machina* was not a roaraway commercial success when it first appeared on the Spectrum. It is currently enjoying a chart position on the Commodore, now that it has been released by Electric Dreams, however. It wasn't a commercial success first time around, but it was fundamentally different to anything that had appeared on the Spectrum when it was released and hasn't been surpassed yet. Mel Croucher intends to continue along the path he set out on with *Deus*. Musician, writer, game designer, software that involves Mel Croucher is very different — is it art?

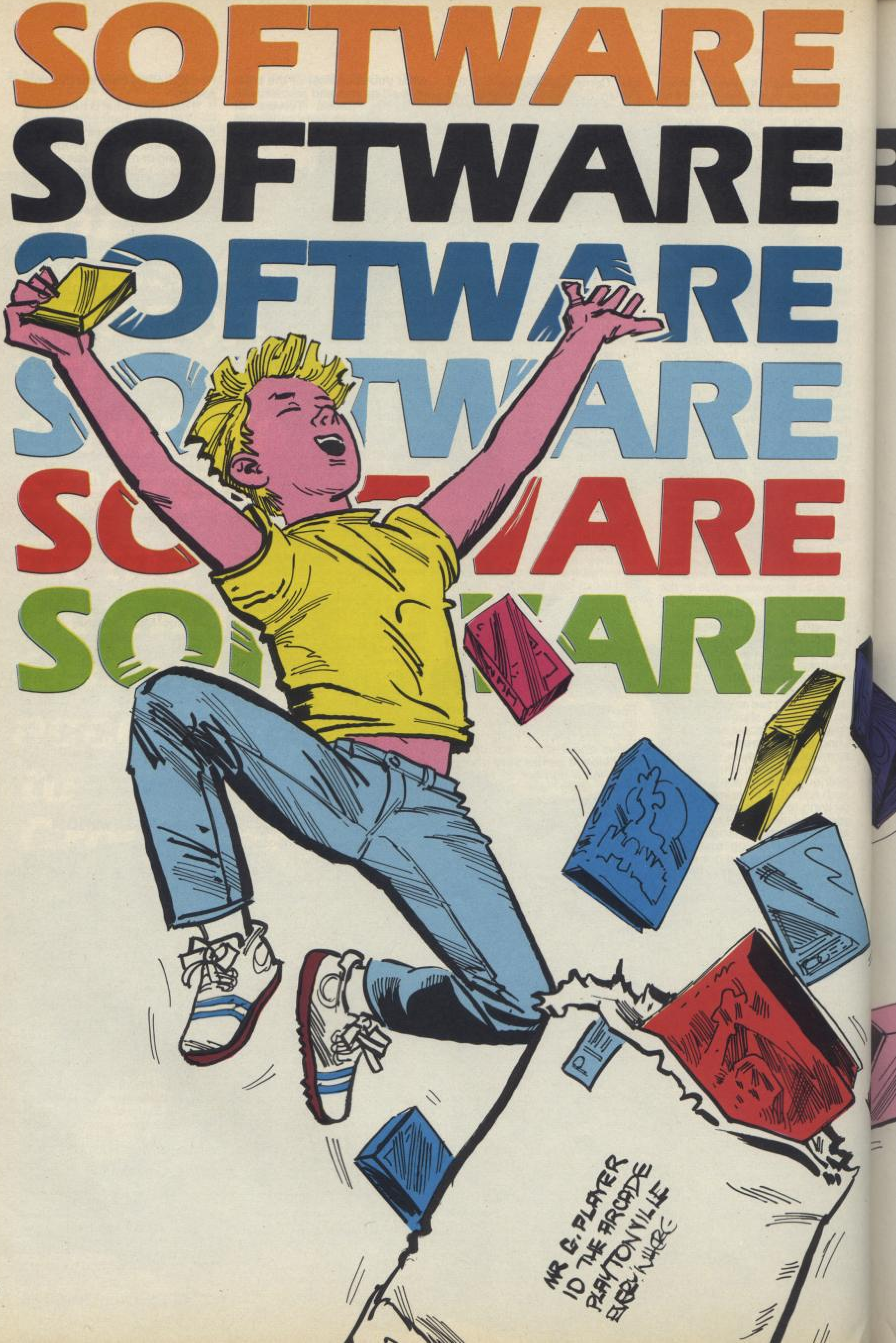
"You'd have to define art! I hope so, that'd be great. Yes, what I'm involved in is art, if you define art as something that the artist has to do. Yes, if art is something that nobody ever gets paid for (thanks for the cheque Clem!). The artist can never make a living out of his work, it is the businessman who has to make the living, therefore you have to compromise."

CHANGES IN MIND◀

Art or no, things are going to have to change in the software industry as it is viewed my Mel Croucher. "Now all the shakeouts that took place in the industry over the last couple of years are over the industry is in the doldrums. It doesn't really matter who owns what now, it's the concept that's becoming important. The kids are getting bored . . . how many machines are stuck away under the stairs out of all those that were sold — over half?

"In this country at least, we've been in the doldrums for a couple of years — there have been no major new concepts and I think that is about to change. Perhaps this year, certainly within two years. It's taken four or five years for everyone to get over Ping Pong and such games, and the whole computer bubble is about to happen over again. The major difference is that once an piece of work is out of my hands it goes on to whoever participates at the other end, the end user. And that's fascinating."

And more than that he would not reveal.


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19 August 1985	*WITHOUT PAGES 123, 124, 125 and 126. WITH:* ●CRL Profile●Pull out Oliposter — Fighting Spectrum●Mirrorsoft Profile●Inside the Timex 2068●Round Up of BASIC Compilers●On the Cover Artist Rich Shenfield●Maps of Dynamite Dan and Shadowfire
20 September 1985	●ALIEN 8 and DUN DARACH maps●Electronic Pencil Company Profile●Part Two of BASIC Compilers Round-up●The 64K Spectrum●Design Design Autoprofile, Part 1●Rod Cousens interview
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25 February 1986	●Durell — the profile●A chat with the Microsphere team●Double dose of Jetman●Gremlin Graphics bring a Ninja to the Spectrum●TECH NICHE looks at a FORTH add-on and examines extensions to ZX BASIC
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GAWSH! OUR HERO HE GOIN' DIE! HE GOIN' GET EATEN BY HIS PAL THE MONSTER! HE GOIN' DOWN THE TUBES THIS TIME, YOU BET! THAT OL' MONSTER HE HONGREE!
THIS IS WHERE YOU GET YOURS!
?
JUS'A MINNIT THO!
LAS' TIME I TRIED TO SCOFF THIS LOONY HE MADE HIS ALL-SEEING EYE-OF-OKTUP GO "BUMF" IN MY FACE...
SHNAP
WELL, I'M NOT GOIN' GO THROUGH THAT AGAIN!
YOU WEREN'T FIGURING ON DOIN' THAT AGAIN WERE YOU?... EH?.. EH?
EH?
HOO!
NOSSIR! NOPE! NO! I WAS NOT! I SHAN'T! NUP! NOPE! SURE WASN'T! HO! NO SIR! YOU BETCHA!
GOOD! NOW I CAN EAT WITH PEACE OF MIND! NOWT WORSE THAN A BOLSHY MEAL!
TIME TO SAY YOUR PR...
WHAT I WAS FIGURING TO DO WAS PULL OUT THE TRUSTY OL' BANG-STICK AN' MAKE IT GO BANG IN YOUR HEAD!
BUMF
BANG!
EVERY TIME...
EVERY GAWDANG TIME...
HO-HUM!
NOW I'LL SWIPE THIS SPACE-SHIP AN' MAKE MY GETAWAY!
BANG!
BANG!
AN' NOW I BET HE'S GONNA SWIPE MY FAN CLUB'S SPACE-SHIP AN' MAKE HIS GETAWAY!
SLAM
ALWAYS BE CAREFUL TO CLOSE THE AIR-LOCK
SCREAM
HAH! GOOD SOLID AIR-LOCK, THAT!
JUS' LISTEN TO THE AIR SCREAMING PAST THE SHIPS HULL!
WHICH IS SUPRISING AS I HAVE NOT EVEN TAKEN OFF YET...
BUT HERE GOES...
I SHALL SOON MASTER THE CONTROLS OF THIS SHIP BY USING ALL MY SKILL AND EXPERIENCE AS A GALACTIC PILOT...
SCREEAAM
...AND A POINTY STICK!
TAP
JAB
STAB
POKE
JAB
HIT
WOW!
THAT'S SOME G-FORCE!
SCREAM
SCREAM
JUDS AD ZOON AD I GED BY DOZE BAG I WILL ZET A COURZE FOR HOBE..
ONE GOOD THING... NOW THAT WERE IN DEEP SPACE, THAT SCREAMING HAS STOPPED!
PITY THAT OL' MONSTER RAN AMUK, I'M GOING TO MISS HIM!
AT LEAST I'VE GOT THIS NEW SHIP AND IT'S MINE, ALL MINE!!
YUP! THAT'S WHAT IT IS, YOU BET! AN' IT'S HIS, ALL HIS! HOH!

Way, Way back in October last year we issued the MUD Challenge. British Telecom sought a CRASH Champion to take on the Champions from other computer magazines in a play off to the death within their Multi User Dungeon which was going to be launched before Christmas.

A variety of glitches and gremlins in the system led to the postponement of the launch of MUD, but it should be on-line any day now. So here's the winning entry in the MUD Spectacular competition — supplied by ANDREW MARSHALL who will go forward to represent CRASH in due course. Meanwhile, have a good read, courtesy of Andrew. We asked you to describe a day's adventuring using around 1,500 words . . .

The tall sinister-looking stranger who entered the Albino Dragon Inn one winter evening caught everyone's imagination. He wore shiny black armour, speckled with dissolving snowflakes, and a wide brimmed black cloth hat, which hid his face. His sword, which he laid in the tack by the door, was decorated with gems and glowed with magical runes.

He sat down at a table, near the corner, and waited. Eventually, Harfik Chalk, an inquisitive dwarf, went over to the man and sat down in a nearby chair. He cleared his throat.

"I couldn't resist coming to speak to you," he said. "You must have many stories to tell".

The stranger looked up, and Harfik caught a glimpse of his lean mouth, though his eyes were still hidden.

"You are right my friend," said the man in a deep, croaky voice. "I have a long and strange tale to tell. It began eight years ago".

Harfik pulled up his chair, and waited for the story to begin. The stranger began to speak:

"Eight years ago, I was a promising young fighter in the arenas. When the religious army of the evil priest Gorgnatas Styl attacked the city, I helped beat back the attack, and slew Styl's brother.

The dwarf was already sitting on the edge of his seat.

"A year later, my brother was hired by a Lyearian merchant to guard a trade caravan on a trade run to the east. A week after it was due to return, a single, driverless cart pulled into town, its horses exhausted. My brother was nailed naked to the side. Slashed on his chest, in deep swordstrokes, were the words:

This is my revenge — Dare you face me yourself? — **STYL**

As I stood crying and heartbroken, watching the corpse of my brother being cut from the cart, I vowed that I would slay Gorgnatas Styl. I would seek out his palace in the east and attack and torture him in the way he had tortured my brother. I set off the next day.

For months I journeyed through the forests, swamps and mountains of the wilderlands. Then one day, I saw a vast building nestled in a hidden valley. It was a huge cathedral. I knew instinctively that this was where I would find Styl.

The door was of wood. Carved, stone faces decorated the archway. The portal was unguarded. Opening it, I entered the cathedral. The walls echoed with the sound of chanting, a frightening, discordant noise. The corridors were empty — it seemed that everybody was worshipping. I climbed up a flight of stairs and tried a door to my left. It was locked. I took a step back, and broke it down.

I stumbled into a room. It was small, with a little window in the far wall. A ladder led up to a trapdoor on my left. Something moved behind me — there was someone else in the room. A priest dressed in scarlet robes held a sword in his hand and advanced upon me.

I tried to turn and tripped. The priest lunged forward and a tearing pain ripped through my chest. I fell against the wall, and clawed for the ladder to hold myself up. Dizziness was overcoming me — everything was spinning and my vision blurred. My blood dripped onto the floor as the priest advanced towards me. I had to escape — I couldn't fight as I was.

I pulled myself up the ladder. It led to a small niche, set in the top of a wall which was at one end of a vast hall, decorated with tapestries and statues. The hall was filled with thousands of people, all dressed in scarlet, all chanting and looking up admiringly at the vast stone figure of an evil looking, bald-headed man that was suspended from the ceiling. Coloured smoke billowed from the image's mouth and its eyes rolled — there were obviously priests inside the hideous creation, working it.





BY ANDREW MARSHALL

There was no escape from the room — it was at least a hundred feet above the floor of the hall, so I couldn't hope to jump into the body of the hall, and there were no doors in the three enclosed sides of the chamber. The priest was nearly at the top of the ladder.

I was now almost fainting from the pain in my chest as it became more acute. My ears rang, and my sight was deteriorating, but still I could make out the shadowy figure of the priest making his way towards me relentlessly. I was hit on the jaw and stumbled backwards — into space. I had been knocked over the edge of the niche and was falling."

Harfik was so excited that he almost fell off his chair.

"And what happened ?" yelled the dwarf.

The stranger continued . . .

"I thought I was going to die, but suddenly the priest grabbed me and swung me back into the room. It was obviously supposed to be a secret — perhaps it was where special effects were rigged up, to be taken as miracles by the fanatical worshippers, or a place where high priests could spy on their inferiors and check that they were showing enough devotion . . . The priests' secret vantage point would have been exposed had I fallen.

The priest was staggering backwards, off balance after pulling me back. Summoning up all of my energy, I ran into him. He was thrown back, tripped, and tumbled down through the still open trapdoor.

He landed on his back at the bottom of the ladder. I jumped down after him, and landed on his upper chest, smashing his ribcage. He gasped once and then lay still.

I stumbled into a corner and slumped to the ground. The blood was still dripping from my chest as I lapsed into unconsciousness . . .

I don't know how long I lay there, but when I regained my senses the ceremony was still in progress, and the sound of chanting had risen in pitch noticeably. The worshippers were becoming frenzied. I climbed back up the ladder, into the hidden niche to hide, to recover.

It was then that I saw Styl . . . . sitting in a throne underneath the figure suspended form the ceiling. My thirst for revenge now aroused, the pain in my chest was forgotten. I thought of a plan — if I could cut the figure down, Styl would be crushed underneath it.

I sized up the possibilities of jumping across to the figure. It was almost impossible, but with the adrenalin pumping through my body I felt I could do anything. I stepped to the back of the niche, ran forward and jumped.

I hit the figure with a slap, but the chanting drowned the noise. I looked around but nobody could see me — they were all facing the front of the figure. I crawled upwards until I could reach the rope that held up the figure. With a yell, I swung my sword and struck the hemp cords that suspended the monolith.

The figure lurched, but didn't fall. I hadn't severed the rope. With another yell, I struck it again . The rope cut cleanly. I grabbed the end still attached to the roof as the hideous stone effigy plummetted downwards. It smashed onto Seyl's throne, crushing him. Coloured smoke began to billow out of the debris. I shouted my joy at my victory.

But I was by no means safe. I was defenceless, hanging by a short length of rope, with hundreds of the furious priests massing below me. An arrow whistled past me. If I stayed where I was, I would surely be killed.

Swinging from the rope, I jumped towards one of the walls, grabbing a tapestry. It ripped halfway across its length, but I held onto one end, hanging downwards. It was slowly tearing more, slowly lowering me towards the frantic crowd. There was a smaller tapestry to my left — I was sure that I recognised it. I looked closer. Yes! It had been the main treasure my brother's trade caravan had carried — a flying carpet! When Styl attacked my brother and the merchants, he must have thought that the carpet was an ordinary tapestry, thought no more of it and hung it in his temple as decoration.

I ripped it off the wall, and yelled the magic words 'Ojai Ling'. The carpet flew along the hallway, with me hanging onto one end, being pulled after it. The priests, screaming with frustration, rushed after me.

I soon outpaced them and guided the carpet towards the exit of the cathedral. As I reached it, I jumped off the carpet and opened the door".

'Leaving? Running? Dare you not fight me?' came a voice from behind. I whirled round, and looked straight into the eyes of Gorgnatas Styl.

My heart leapt, my mind was numb. I tried to reach for my sword but some power was paralysing me. Styl walked towards me. He grinned and great fangs showed, stained with blood. Then I knew why Styl had not been killed by the falling figure — he was a vampire! Now that I had looked into his eyes, he had control over me. I was powerless to save myself, as his glistening fangs came nearer and nearer . . . ."

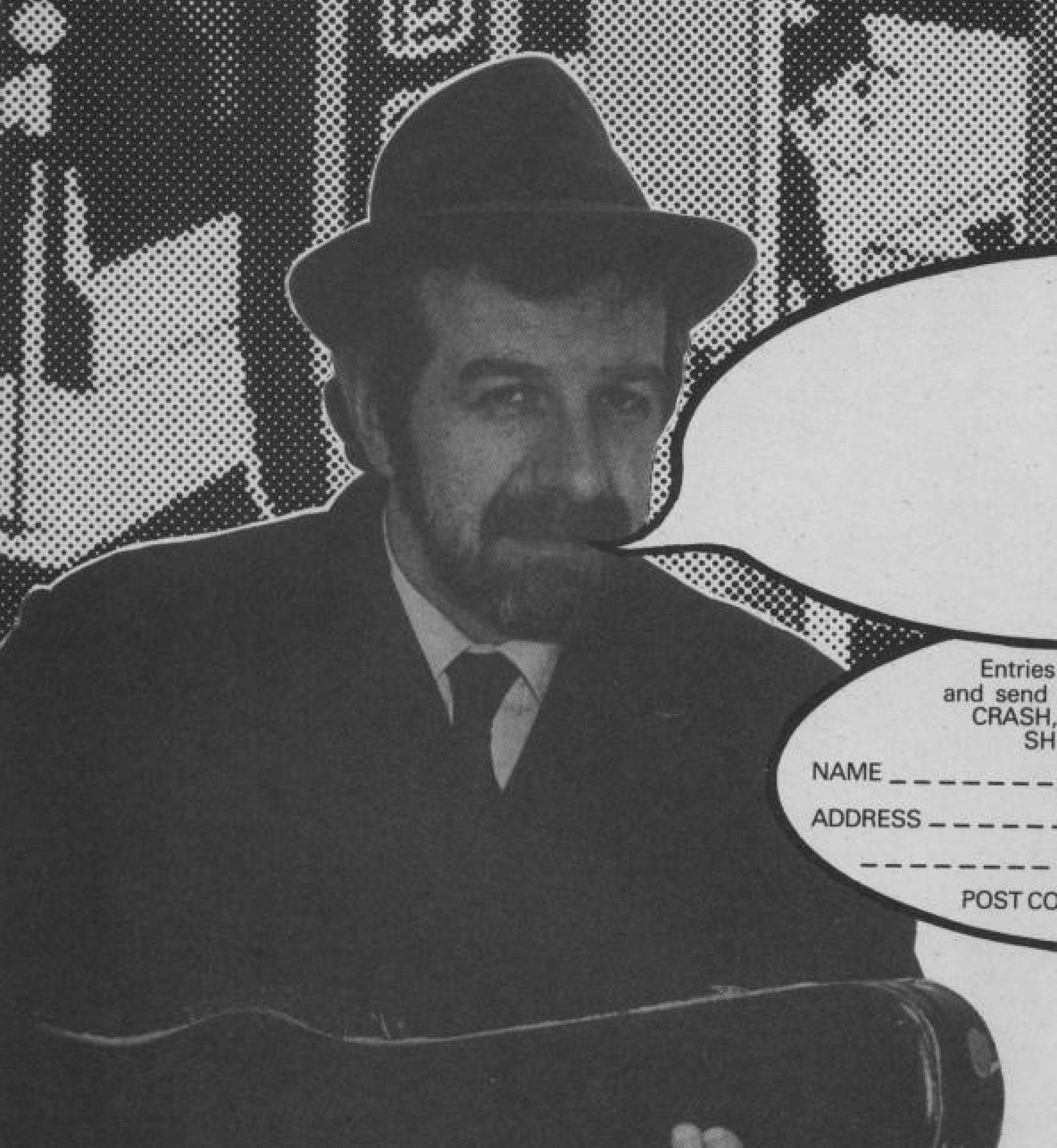
Harfik Chalk was almost speechless with excitement.

"And how did you escape?" he gasped.

"I didn't", said the stranger, sinking his fangs into the dwarf's neck.

Crash Competition

MUGSY GETS HIS REVENGE.



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This time it's the turn of Geoff Heath — he's a Really Big Cheese at Melbourne House — and he's posing in their new offices with his violin case. It's all in aid of their new release, MUGSY's REVENGE, you see. Mugsy has returned, and now he's peddling booze in gangsterland to earn an honest dollar.

The Spectrum version of the game isn't quite finished yet, but soon fifty CRASH readers will be playing the game for free, as a result of this competition. Could you take Mugsy to the top in MUGSY's REVENGE? Well, start out by writing a caption for this photo — Geoff Brown certainly got to the top at Melbourne House. But he's such a nice guy, he probably only keeps his sarnies in that violin case.

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TECH NICHE



Our resident Musical Maestro, JON BATES, takes a quick look at a device which gives a 48K machine the musical abilities of the 128 and gets with the beat on Cheetah's SpecDrum.

Upgrade Your Sound Capabilities

Let's have a look through the cupboards at CRASH and see what's there said the Editor. Lurching towards a tottering pile of assorted hard and software and muttering about simian (but invisible!) fellow operatives, he commenced to hurl review material towards yours truly with all the grace and skill of a seasoned American Football pro. *See what you make of that — some of it has been here a bit — 'scuse me, pressing engagement.* And with that he swept out. Well this little item has been around for a bit but never let it be said that the CRASH reviewing team turns down material.

The *ZXM* is an add-on for the Spectrum containing a programmable sound generator which can produce a wide variety of effects. An internal audio amplifier with volume control and loudspeaker gives a very adequate sound level for normal use. The unit fits on to the edge connector, picking up its power from the Spectrum and is compatible with printers and Microdrives, according to **Timebase**, the manufacturers.

Thoughtfully, an audio socket has been included together with an I/O port to allow other bolt-ons to be added on as well. This is really useful either for amplifying the Beep from the Spectrum by taking a lead from the ear socket on the computer, or for other sound peripherals such as sound samplers. The ZXM comes in the usual anonymous black plastic box with a speaker grille, socket, volume control knob and provision for a joystick control.

Taking a quick look inside reveals the sound chip as the AY-3-8912 — a chip that features in several other micros including the 128K Spectrum. In a nutshell, this device can take your Spectrum's sound capabilities up to the same level as the 128K machine, giving three channels of sound plus a noise generator, all fully mixable, as well as a wide variety of envelopes (sound shapes). By careful fine tuning all the usual sound effects and tones can be achieved.

Programming the ZXM involves loading values into the 8912's sound registers. This can be done by writing your own programs or via the editing software provided on cassette with the unit. Some sample sounds — exploding bombs and so on — are included on the cassette. What is lacking in this package is a more sophisticated music program to help you write music directly without having to fiddle about, but the market is littered with programs that drive this particular chip and it should be possible to adapt and rewrite existing software if you were so inclined.

The ZXM instruction booklet is most informative, and gives you all the the internal addresses and I/O port details that are needed before attempting to hook it up to suitable controlling devices via the 7 bit I/O port (don't get involved unless you're a dab hand with a soldering iron and are also at one with the internals of musical keyboards).

This box of squeaks brings the 48K Spectrum musically into line with the 128. Both this review and the product are long overdue.

'Scuse me — pressing engagement!

ZXM SOUNDBOX
£29.95
Timedata Ltd,
16 Memmels High Rd,
Laindon,
Basildon, Essex
SS15 6ED
Tel: 0268 418121

SPECDRUM



Producers: Cheetah Marketing
Authors: P Henning and A Pateman

Hooray! After a much intrigue involving distributors, as well as marketing and PR type people, CRASH finally gets to look at the **SpecDrum**. Nothing unfriendly, you understand, it just took a while to get hold of a review unit. By now quite a few copies of this musical package will have been sold, but if you haven't yet rushed out to buy SpecDrum, read on....

SpecDrum is a bolt-on package that gives you a kit of drums. Not your usual naff drum noises, but real drums sampled onto a chip. Very briefly this means that the sound made by each drum is stored digitally. When the unit is fired up it makes sounds which are just like the real thing — well, nearly. More to the point, most records use some form of digital drum nowadays, and so the sounds produced with Spec Drum are familiar and really great to work with. On a technical note it can record any sort of time signature and beat known to western civilization.

The hardware is contained in the usual matt black box with a phono lead attached. The latter can be plugged into an audio amplifier, a mixer, a recorder or even a megawatt PA system depending on the proximity of your nearest and dearest. Within this box are the chips which produce the drum sounds. The accompanying program allows the Spectrum to fire the drums at your command and fashion the timing into any complex arrangement, depending only on your inventive ability.

SpecDrum comes with a standard kit: Bass Drum, Snare Drum, Mid and Low TomToms, Cowbell, Hi Hat open and closed and Hand Claps, although there is no side or crash cymbal which is a little sad. The sound quality of all these is excellent; having used them on my own tapes which have been played to long-suffering colleagues, the verdict was pretty unanimous — for less than £30 it is an absolute give-away, considering that a drum machine will set you back around £250 and is not half so friendly to use. What's more you can load up different drum sounds, programmed on the other side of the cassette, and have a different kit, and new tapes are planned — a Latin kit is already available. The unit comes complete with a clear and comprehensive guide book.

TO WORK TO WORK...

In outline what you do is write a drum pattern, let's say of two bars length. You can either do this by tapping in each drum/key in turn to a fixed metronome beat (realtime) or by writing direct onto a graphic display (steptime). A little bit of forethought is needed here as you will need to decide how many drum strokes you need for each musical beat. (You can divide each beat into 32 strokes if you're that barmy!).

The program initially defaults to a fixed tempo, but this is easily altered either by numeric input or more simply by pressing L or ENTER while your pattern is playing back. Any change of tempo is noted and stored away. Regardless of how you have created the pattern, you can see it graphically. The edit option gives you complete control to add or take away whatever drumbeats you like, but if that is too difficult, go back to the realtime page and delete or add the drum you want as it plays. A really useful feature of the realtime writing option is that the micro compensates for your lack of accuracy, and shoves the tapped-in drumbeat to the nearest division of a beat.



You can file your short drum pattern away. Songs rarely consist of the same drumbeat all the way through: the most bovine of skin-bashers likes a variation every now and again. Answer: create another pattern. And then another. When you have a compendium of short patterns duly filed and numbered it's time to assemble them into a song format.

The Song Edit page allows the patterns to be edited into a sequence, with individual patterns repeated and placed into whatever order you see fit. The whole format (now called a Song) is given a name and can be dumped onto cassette and recalled later. A song could consist of 255 entries, each one of which may be looped 255 times — enough for several hours of endless drumming. The program can store up to 16 songs at one go which is more than enough for the most ambitious rhythm merchant.

Although it has eight drum sounds, SpecDrum can only cope with three channels, meaning that some drums cannot be produced simultaneously. But this limitation has been catered for, and presents no real problem. The update cassette has a chain editor on it. With this you can reverse the sound of any drum — Simon Goodwin has more information in this issue's TECH TIPS.

I would have liked to have seen a volume and accent option so that some beats could be sounded louder than others, but for the real whizz kids the units offers a syncro pulse input/output. If you're recording onto a multi-track machine a sync pulse is put onto one track. You then record each drum on a separate track, using the recorded sync pulse as a master clock for the program. You are then free to alter the sound of each drum individually and boost or cut the volume at will. In operation I found the SpecDrum's noise level quite acceptable.

To sum up, this is a major achievement for a ridiculously low price. SpecDrum is very easy to use and the sounds are certainly good studio quality. Even if you can't play drums but are keen to add a bit of solid beat to your musical instrument at home, then this is your wisest choice, and it would be a good idea to set up a number of patterns for quick use. If you have a relative with a keyboard that has one of those horrid drum boxes you could do a little cost sharing — Relative gets a far superior drum sound, you get the fun of programming them up and the use of the SpecDrum to help you become a megastar.

If you do end up rich and famous, please remember where you first heard about it — all donations gratefully accepted and quickly spent.

Jon Bates

AMX MOUSE



Our man with his finger on the button, FRANCO FREY, prods the buttons on a mouse for a change. AMX are the people behind this particular rodent . . .

ART STUDIO has done a lot to popularise the mouse as a practical cursor transport device for the Spectrum by supporting both the Kempston and the AMX mouse. Buying the AMX MOUSE also brings the customer several support programs, including AMX ART and AMX PALETTE which are in direct competition to ART STUDIO and provide all the facilities required for screen creations. These programs are styled along the lines of the innovative MACPAINT program, in much the same way as THE ARTIST. Then there is AMX CONTROL and ICON DESIGNER, which enable users to create a mouse environment in their own programs. AMX CONTROL is a machine code program, which extends the BASIC interpreter to incorporate mouse associated commands, while ICON DESIGNER allows the design of user specific ICONS. A demonstration program displays the many possibilities and should encourage further experimentation.

THE HARDWARE

The mouse interface accepts the mouse cord via a 20 way ribbon connector and plugs into the Spectrum system bus. The interface contains a Centronics type parallel printer port, so that your screen creations can end up on a full width dot matrix printer. Owners of serial printers gain access to screen dumps via Interface 1. Less pecunious users will stick to the more mundane Alphacom or ZX printer, which connects up between the Spectrum and the mouse interface. To get the mouse up and running one of the programs that are supplied with the hardware needs to be loaded from cassette.

AMX ART

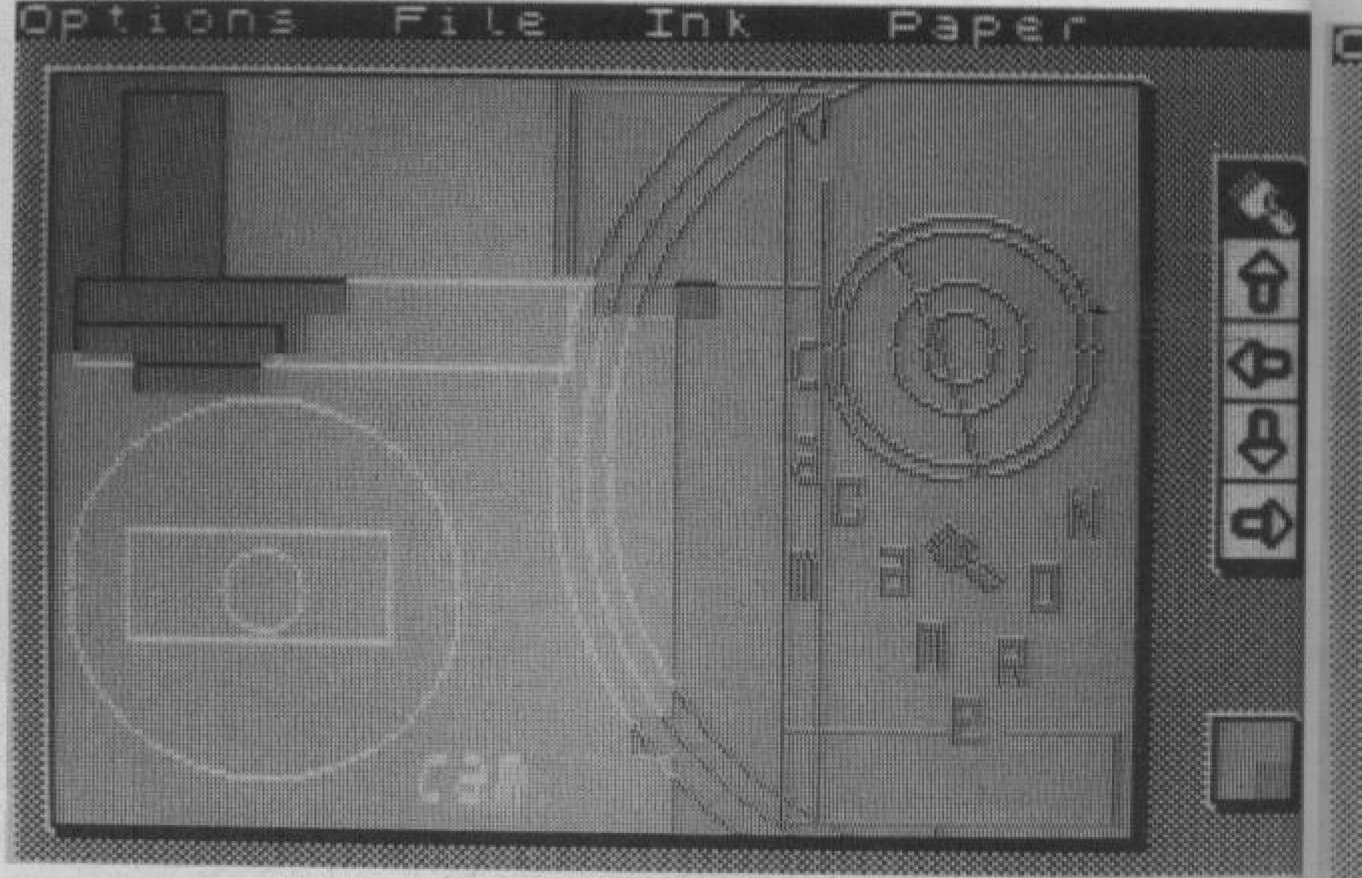
AMX ART may be transferred to Microdrive with the inbuilt transfer facility. After loading the main screen displays a window on the righthand side containing 8 icons representing the various drawing tools. In fact there are a total of 16 tools and these can be accessed by pointing the mouse to the UP window and scrolling the tool window to display the hidden icons. AMX ART interprets the three buttons on the mouse as EXECUTE, MOVE and CANCEL keys and these are used for the selection of the

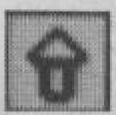
required tools.

Once an icon has been selected, it works in the main drawing area, and pointing the icon outside this area automatically reverts back to the arrow icon for select mode. Above the drawing window, a line with the words OPTIONS, FILES, TEXT, LINE and TIPS is displayed. Each of these head up a pull down menu which can be accessed by pressing the EXECUTE button once the cursor is pointing at the appropriate title. The menu drops down and with EXECUTE held down, the mouse cursor is moved down the menu, indicated by a moving black bar, until the desired selection is reached and selected by releasing the EXECUTE button. The selection is stored and the menu automatically rolls up.

The main drawing tools consist of a pencil, a paint brush and a spray can. The PENCIL allows you to draw a line on the main drawing area and freehand sketches are achieved by moving the pencil icon around while holding the EXECUTE button down. For point to point drawing, the EXECUTE button is pressed once to position the starting point. Moving the pencil displays a trailing line which is fixed with the next EXECUTE which also provides a new starting point. Pressing the MOVE button simply shifts the starting point. Lines can be drawn in black, white or inverted mode and can be selected by pulling down the LINE menu.

The PAINT BRUSH draws a wide band in the current shade while the EXECUTE button is depressed. The shading pattern





"Select the shade you require" is the prompt on the screen which allows you to choose from the forty shading patterns available in the AMX MOUSE screen art package

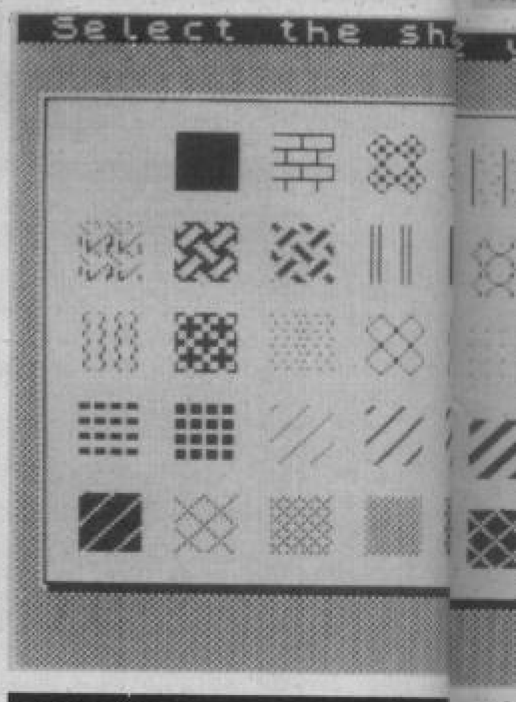
is selected via the PALETTE icon and the brush width with the TIPS pull down menu. PALETTE reveals forty shading patterns which are displayed for selection over the main screen area and they can be applied with four sizes of brush tip.

The SPRAY CAN operates similarly to the PAINT BRUSH with four different spray widths. The ERASER cleans the screen area within the defined ERASER icon while the EXECUTE button is depressed. The PAINT ROLLER is the fill tool and fills the enclosed area with the required shade.

ALPHA provides text entry and any alphabetic or numeric character may be placed anywhere on the screen. There are four basic fonts which are selected with the TEXT pull down menu before entering ALPHA mode. These are SINCLAIR, BOLD, 2001 (computer style) and ITALIC, and text may be single or double height.

Special drawing functions are provided with the BOX MODE, SHADED BOX MODE, CIRCLE MODE and SHADED CIRCLE MODE. These provide correspondingly variable sized rectangles and circles with or without shaded filling, and are added to the screen using the first EXECUTE to fix one corner of the rectangle or the centre of the circle and the second EXECUTE to fix the diagonally opposite corner of the rectangle or the radius dimension of the circle. MOVE allows a repositioning of the first corner or the centre of circle.

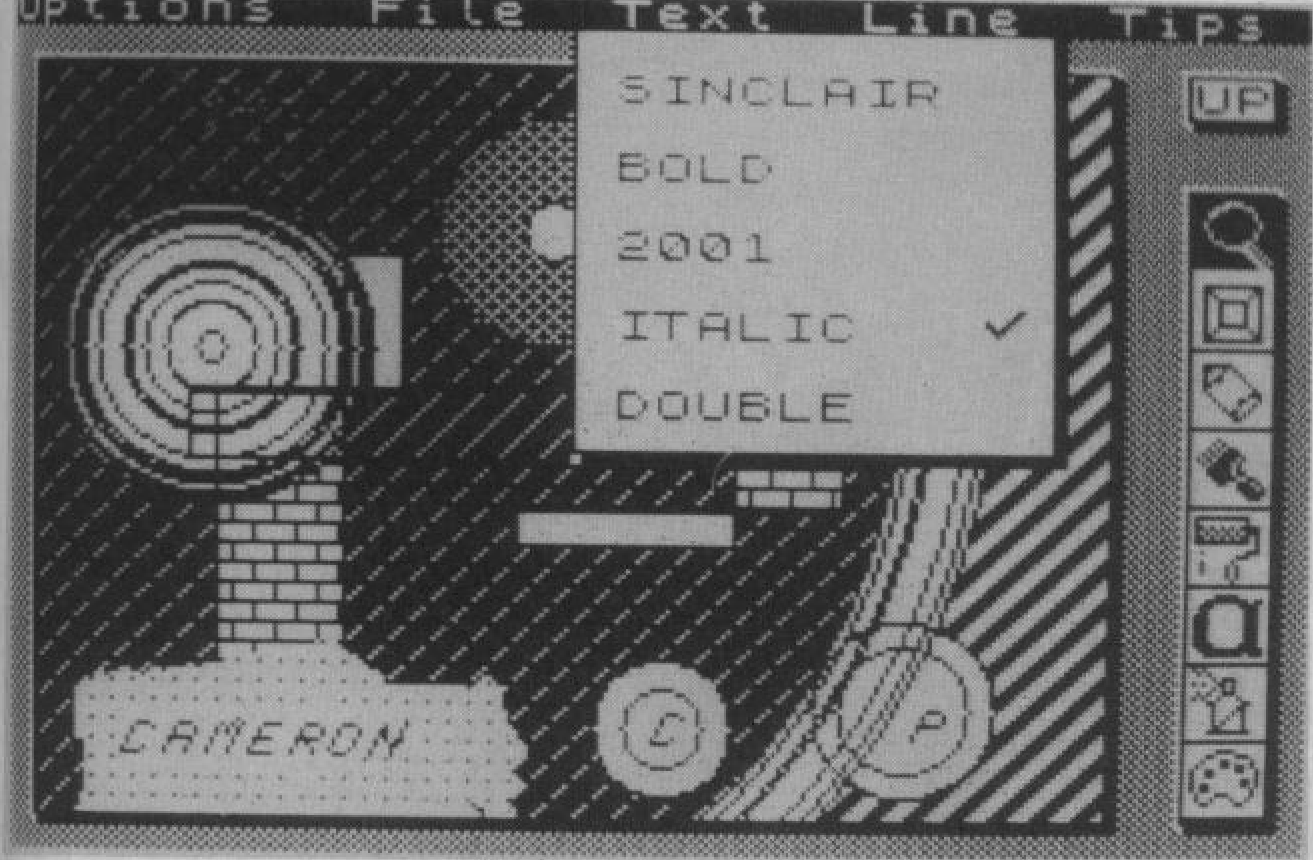
For anybody concerned with the size of the on-screen drawing area there is good news. The drawing area is four times the size of the screen drawing window. This means a 416 by 304 pixel drawing board is available. To access the hidden areas, the drawing screen may be scrolled by pointing to the four SCROLL icons and pressing the EXECUTE button repeatedly. The full drawing screen may be overviewed in reduced form with the help of the SHOWPAGE selection in the OPTIONS pull down menu. Last but not least the MAGNIFYING GLASS icon presents a zoom window of fixed size which may be positioned over the area to be magnified. Pressing EXECUTE displays the zoom area magnified by a factor of four, together with a full-size view of the zoom window. Pixels may be set or reset by pointing at them and pressing EXECUTE. When the detail work is accomplished, the modified zoom window may be either accepted or discarded by pointing to the ACCEPT or DISCARD box and pressing EXECUTE.

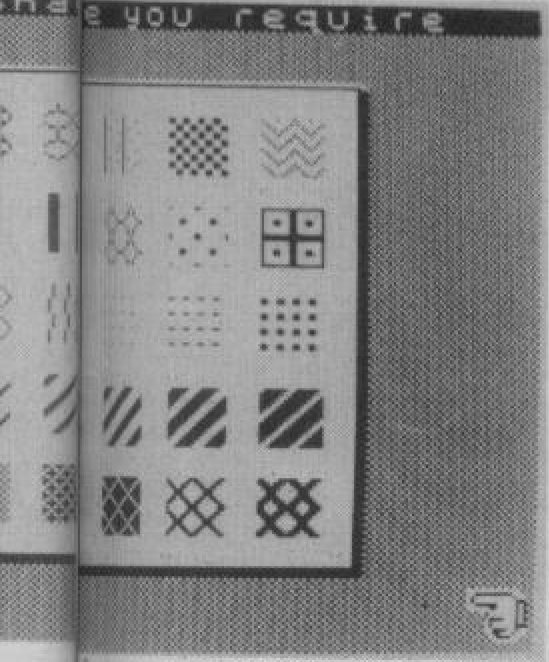


The PALETTE part, where you add colour to your composition



The little beastie in all its glory: THE AMX MOUSE





Illustrating the use of the pull-down menu system in the AMX ART package. Here Cameron, ubiquitous CRASH photographer and screen graffiti artist is going for an italic typeface

The OPTIONS pull down menu contains various system options and functions. CLEAR empties the main screen area and the corresponding background area; CLEAR ALL the entire background screen. LOCK 0, 4 and 8 locks the movement of the mouse to within specified grid increments and is useful for drawing long straight lines, positioning line ends or tying up with colour attribute boundaries. Printer information is sent via the parallel or serial port or using the ZX print facility by selecting AMS, RS232 or ZX PRINT options. PRINT OUT dumps the picture to the printer. ZX PRINT limits the print out size to 255 by 192 pixels. Using the serial or parallel port there is the option of the print size. The area of the main screen to be printed is surrounded with the box and EXECUTE pressed. TAPE or M-DRIVE selects the file destination and source. FINISHED allows you to exit the program.

The FILE pull down menu enables you to save and retrieve pictures to and from cassette or Microdrive cartridge depending on the file option setting in the OPTIONS menu. SAVE PAGE saves the full drawing screen and requires about 16K of Microdrive space. LOAD PAGE loads pages saved with SAVE PAGE. GET SHADE loads a new set of shade patterns into the palette menu. Normal screen files may be loaded using the IMPORT option, while the top left hand corner of the main drawing screen may be saved as a normal screen using the EXPORT function.

AMX COLOUR PALETTE

Once the screen has been edited and saved with AMX ART using the EXPORT option, the COLOUR PALETTE program can be loaded. The colouring of an existing black and white screen is performed by selecting the BRUSH icon, positioning it and pressing EXECUTE. The character area converts to the current ink and paper colour, and the transparent ink and paper colour do not seem to be able to be selected. This would be useful for operating with ink or paper independently and thus cutting down the multiple selection of colour combinations. The ink and paper colours are selected with the INK and PAPER pull down menus, while Bright and Flash can be set in the OPTIONS menu. The current status of the colours, Flash and Bright are given in the windows at the bottom right of the screen.

The only other icons are the four direction arrows, which provide access to the hidden areas of the screen.

The OPTIONS menu enables tape or Microdrive selection and also provides an exit to BASIC by NEWing the computer. The FILE menu is accessed for loading and saving screens. Screenfiles produced with AMX ART must have been saved with the EXPORT command and not with the SAVE PAGE command.

AMX CONTROL

AMX CONTROL is designed to allow the users of the AMX MOUSE to incorporate mouse activities in their own programs. This is done by extending the Spectrum BASIC interpreter to include mouse associated commands.

AMX CONTROL must be loaded and initialised before the mouse can be activated. RAMTOP must be lowered to 45000 and initialisation is done with a USR statement. AMX CONTROL adds 28 commands to normal Sinclair BASIC which are all preceeded with an asterisk.

The functions provide all the facilities required for monitoring the mouse positions and switches, providing menu headers, pulling down menus (including storing the corresponding overwritten screen area), displaying, hiding and moving icons, printer commands for the support of the Centronics port, monitoring the status of menu parameters and creating windows with selectable paper colours. Two proportionally spaced fonts are provided for the user and with 32 inbuilt patterns may be used to fill in specified rectangle areas. There is even an error trapping routine in support of Sinclair BASIC.

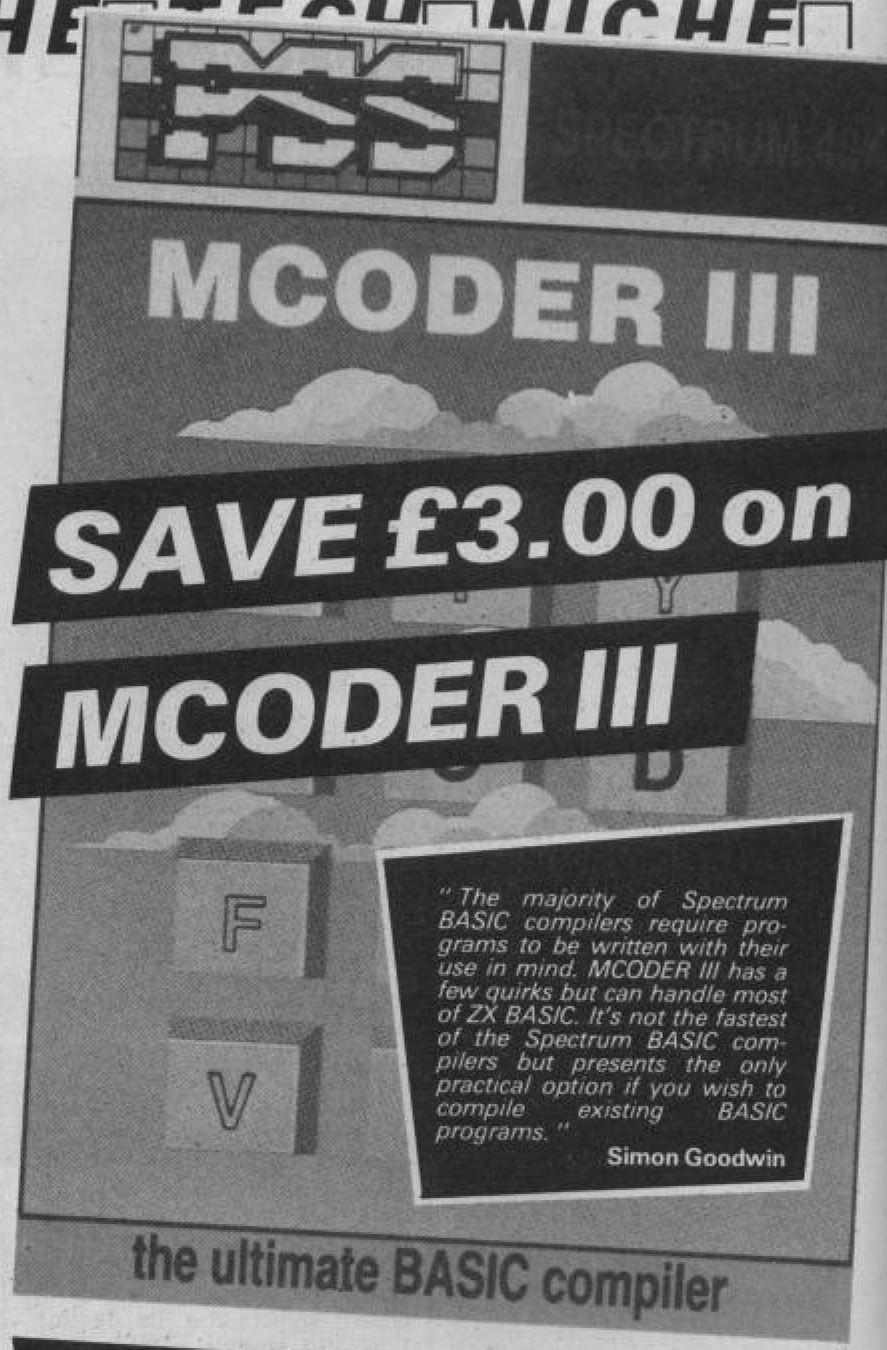
It isn't too difficult to create programs running under mouse control and featuring icons, pull down menus and windows by simply including the extended commands within your BASIC program. BASIC DEMO software includes a four function calculator and a sliding puzzle to help you get the hang of catering for the mouse in your own program code. All commands are carefully documented in the manual and information for access of some of the commands from assembly language is provided for the more advanced user.

CONCLUSION

The AMX MOUSE is a lovely little creature. It is an ideal tool which provides fast and accurate cursor positioning for drawing and menu selection. The software support provides all the help required to incorporate the mouse operation in normal BASIC programs. AMX ART is an excellent drawing utility reminiscent of MAC PAINT. It is a shame that the screen colour work has to be run separately from the main program, as it is not always performed after the whole screen is designed. This means a lot of to and froing between AMX ART and PALETTE. It would appear that PALETTE was an afterthought, and the omission of transparent colours means a lot of colour combination selections for a colourful screen. The Centronics port is a real bonus when it comes to dumping screens, and generally for llisting and lprinting. The manual is concise and excellently executed. A very worthwhile product with an unfortunately high price tag for Spectrum owners. Start saving!

Franco Frey

AMX MOUSE
Producer: Advanced Memory Systems Ltd
Green Lane, Appleton, Warrington, WA4 5NG
Tel: 0925 602690
PRICE: £69.95 48K/128K Spectrum



Collect a £3.00 voucher redeemable against your next PSS game bought direct from them as well!

Back in October last year Simon Goodwin took a look at BASIC compilers for the Spectrum in Tech Niche. *Mcoder III*, a program written by French software house Ere Informatique fared reasonably well in the comparison tests.

PSS are the fellows who are selling the compiler in this country — and it usually goes for £12.95. But they're nice chaps at PSS, and they've agree to let Tech Niche readers have their very own copy of *Mcoder III* for £9.95 — and you don't need a compiler to work out that's a saving of £3.00. But there's more. PSS are going to throw in a £3.00 voucher, redeemable against any PSS game for the Spectrum providing you buy it direct from PSS mail order at 452 Stoney Stanton Road, Coventry, CV6 5DG.

Not a bad deal, eh? If you'd like to take advantage of this money saving offer, whizz a cheque or postal order for £9.95 made payable to CRASH MICRO to Auntie Aggie together with the coupon at the foot of the page. She'll do the business for you...

PLEASE SEND ME A MCODER III

NAME ....

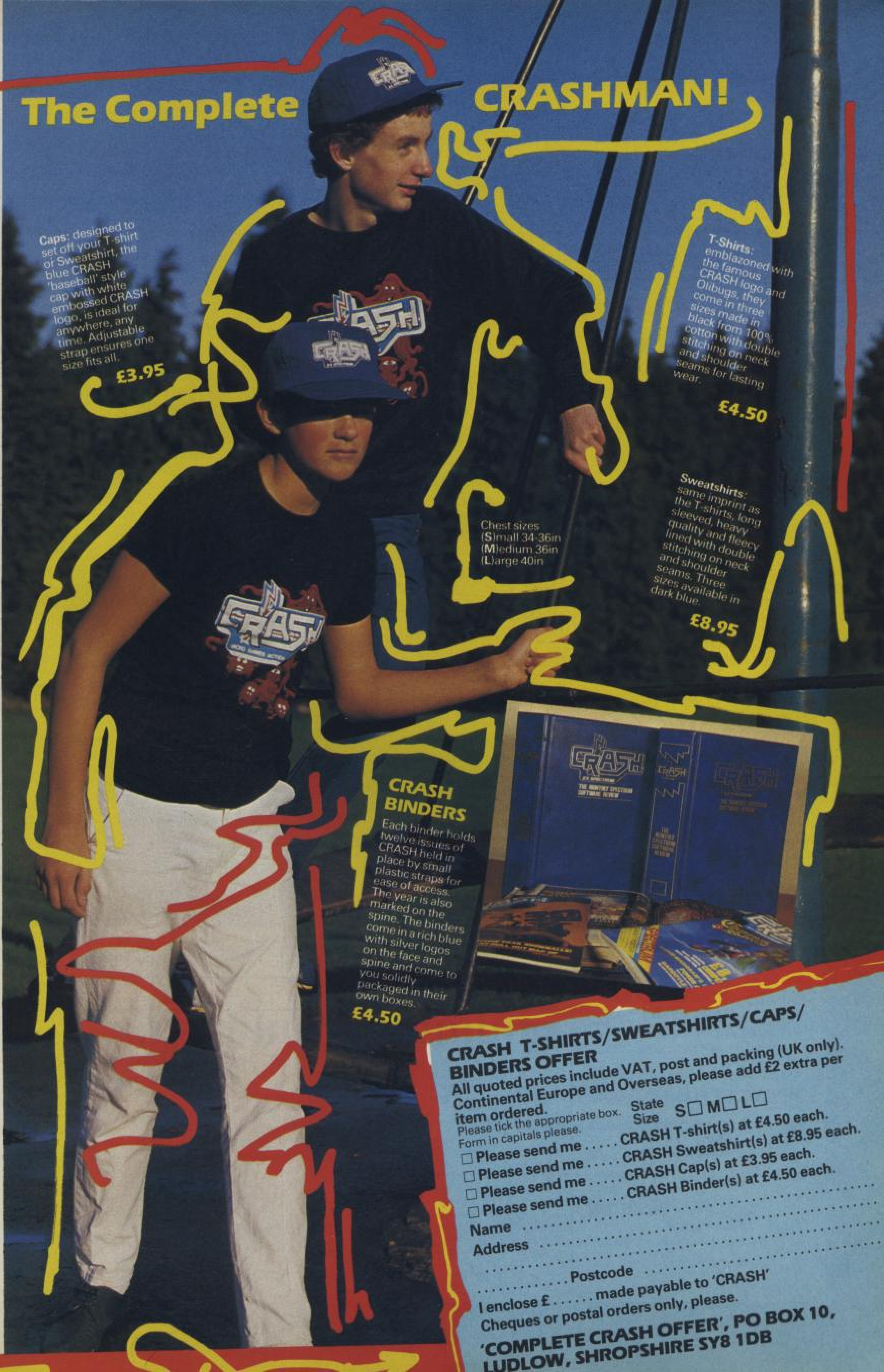
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TECH TIPS

Simon Goodwin



This month Simon Goodwin crawls out from under a mound of waste paper and sauted circuits to bring us a hardware project and the usual TECH TIPS mixture of news, advice and aggravated libel.

MISSING LINK

I was obviously tempting fate with my remarks about wandering wisdom last month. The postbag column on page 84 was meant to lead into the section headed TWIDDLY BITS on the next page, but the pieces about Lenslok and Microdrive medication got into the gap between the two. It all makes sense if you read the grey bits as if they followed one another. This month, of course, there are no mistakes at all . . .

NEW FOR OLD

If last month's review of the Spectrum 128 made you long for an upgrade, TECH TIPS is proud to bring you a couple of useful new features at bargain-basement prices. As usual, you should resist the temptation to pull your computer apart unless it is out of warranty and you are confident with a soldering iron. You can add a Reset button this month, and a composite video output next month, for nothing more than the cost of some wire, a resistor, a socket and a switch.

RESET BUTTON

One of the most common faults on Spectrums is a broken power socket. This usually fails because the Spectrum has no on/off switch, so the easiest way to reset the machine is to pull out the power lead. Sinclair have used a proper power plug on the Spectrum, unlike the earphone plug used on the ZX-81, so you don't run much risk of blowing up your power-supply by unplugging it and re-connecting it, but the mechanical wear and tear on the socket can lead to unreliable operation and unwelcome crashes, or even the total failure of the machine.

The electrical effects of removing and then re-connecting the power are felt even if you handle the socket very carefully. Components are at their most vulnerable when power is suddenly applied to them, and many large computers are left on continuously to reduce the risk of damage from power-surges. The Spectrum is pretty robust, but even so it is pointless to shock it unnecessarily.

IN THEORY

You can reset the Spectrum Plus and the Spectrum 128 without fiddling with the plug — you just press the reset button. This doesn't cut off the power — it sends a special signal to the processor and the rest of the system, telling the components to behave as if they had just been turned on. **David Tonks** from Walsall has written in to say how a reset button can be added to the standard plain vanilla Spectrum. A small reward will be winging its way to David soon — the figure shows his general idea.

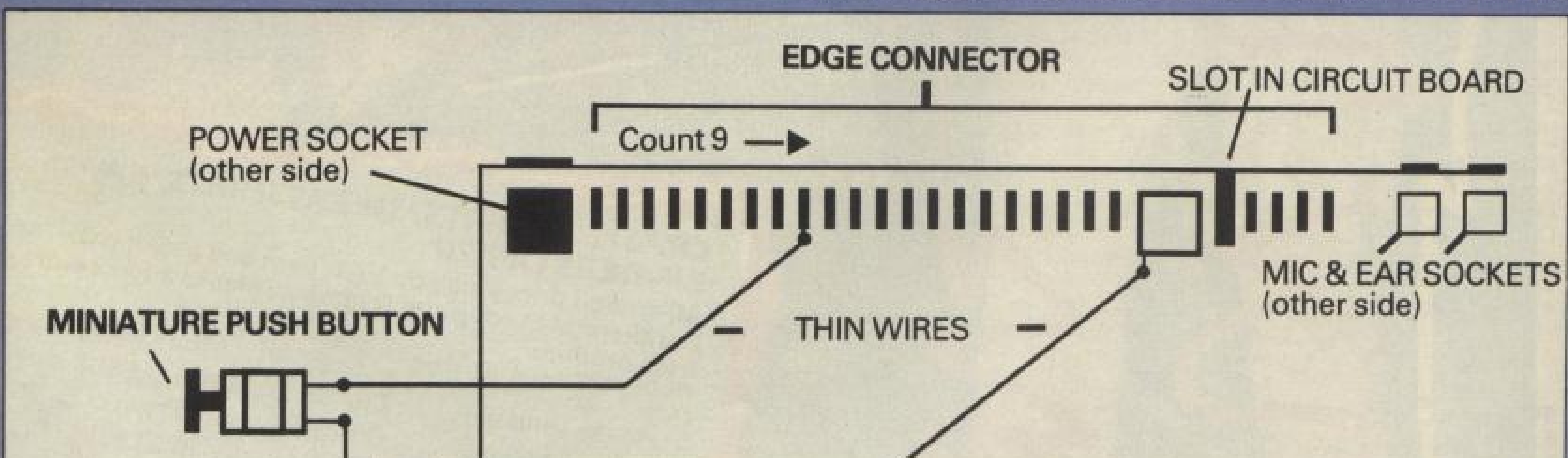
A wire goes from the 'reset' pin on the Spectrum's edge connector, to the 0 volt or 'ground' wire, via a switch and a 220 ohm resistor. The last component was not part of David's original design, but it is a useful precaution to limit the current through the switch. You will be grateful for this if you connect the wires in the wrong place or the capacitor built into the Spectrum's Reset circuit is a bit feeble. The exact component value is not critical — anything between about 100 and 1,000 ohms should do the trick, and the wattage doesn't matter either — the current through the switch will be intermittent and tiny.

IN PRACTICE

Disconnect EVERYTHING and then dismantle the Spectrum in the usual way, by removing the five screws underneath the machine.

Unplug the keyboard by gently pulling the two membrane connections out of their sockets. Undo the screw in the middle of the main circuit board, so that you can turn the board solder-side up.

You will need to connect two wires to the 'back' of the edge fingers as far from the edge of the board as is possible. One wire goes to the leftmost finger, with the edge-connector pointing away from you, and the



other wire goes to the finger which is ninth from the left as you view the connector.

Check the figure, then solder a short length of thin wire to each finger. Put a little 'fresh' solder on the ends of the wires before you press them against the board with the soldering iron — you should not hold the iron in place for more than a second. Make sure that you haven't accidentally 'bridged' two fingers with solder — this could be disastrous.

Solder the resistor to the other end of one wire — it doesn't matter which — and then connect the remaining wire and the free end of the resistor to a small momentary-action switch, as shown in the figure. The resistor can go either way round. The switch should have a single pair of contacts that are normally open. Neatly cover the ends of the resistor and the back of the switch with insulating tape.

You can fit the switch inside the Spectrum box if you are tidy, putting it next to the TV socket, but you may prefer to run the wires under the board and out through the holes for the Ear or Mic sockets. You then have to be careful not to catch the switch on something when you move your computer about, but this shouldn't be too much of a risk if you kept the wires short — 100-150mm should be plenty long enough.

Connect just the TV and the power supply to the circuit board, making sure that the board is clear from anything that conducts electricity. The Spectrum should give the normal 'start up' display. If it doesn't, disconnect the power immediately and check your work.

When you press and release the button the screen should clear as if you had just turned on the machine, and the Sinclair Copyright message should re-appear. If anything else happens you should disconnect the power at once and check your wiring — you have probably made the connections in the wrong place. This should not cause any damage, but you should correct the mistake promptly.

When all appears well, screw the circuit-board back in place and push the membranes back into their sockets. Be gentle and make sure that you insert the membranes squarely (at right angles to the board). Replace the top of the computer and reconnect the TV and power supply. Check that the reset button still works, and that all of the keys work correctly. If they don't, check that the membranes have been fully inserted. Again, there is no need to use force. Replace the screws in the underside of the computer once the switch and the keys have tested out OK.

WIMP INTERFACE

There is an alternative way of wiring the switch if you are reluctant to take your computer apart. You can put the switch wires on a separate edge socket that plugs into the Spectrum. Make sure that you get the correct points on the socket, by lining it up with the figure. Remember that the view shows the underside of the board.

If you have a ZX Printer you can use this approach without needing to buy an edge socket. Take the printer plug apart and put the wires onto the short circuit-board which forms the 'through-connector'. Don't dismantle the printer itself unless you like juggling with a 3D mosaic of precision plastic!

COMPOSITE VIDEO

Next month I'll explain how you can get a good-quality composite video output from a Spectrum or Spectrum Plus. The modification is even simpler than that for the reset button, although you'll need to pull your computer apart again.

Composite video gives a much better picture than a normal TV output, because it bypasses the circuitry used to add and remove the radio signal that a telly expects — that circuitry distorts the picture and spoils the resolution. The new connection will let you connect your Spectrum directly to many types of colour or black and white monitor, or to a video recorder or posh modern telly with a direct video input.

THIS YEAR's MODEL

I was surprised that Sinclair didn't build a joystick port into the Spectrum 128, but I suspect that it will be possible to add one using the procedure explained in the December CRASH. I'm still waiting my turn to fiddle with the latest machine — they leave me till last in case I blow it up — so I wouldn't advise anyone to try it until next issue, when I should have had time to dig around inside this year's model and report back. Of course, there's not much point bolting on a home-made composite video port or a reset button, as they come as standard on the 128.

TWO-WAY TIPS

As promised, I'm sifting through the Tech Tips mailbox this month. My apologies to anyone who has been waiting a while for advice, but it has taken some time for our postbag to build up and this wasn't helped by the mysterious development of some sort of time-warp between Crash Mail Order (where the post gets shredded) and the various dark corners where I get to read it. Anyhow, communications are now established and — to prove it — here's our first big batch of two-way Tech Tips.

SPECDRUM HINTS

Ryk Coleman has written in with some hints on use of Cheetah's *Specdrum*, which Jon Bates tunes up elsewhere in this issue.

Ryk is using the Specdrum in conjunction with a 'proper' drum kit in a pop band called *Cephas*, with what he describes as 'interesting' results. He recommends the *Latin Kit* which Cheetah launched recently. The kit costs just £3.99, and consists of a cassette with eight 'new' drum sounds on one side and an editor with which you can mix the new and old drums into a kit of your own specification. Of course, the kit is useless unless you've already got a Specdrum.

The editor also allows you to 'reverse' the sound of any drum — according to Ryk this is a great way to get 'New Order' drum sounds! The tambourine actually sounds more convincing backwards than it does forwards, and Ryk reckons that the Kick drum sound in the Latin kit is an improvement upon the original one. What is still missing is a decent cymbal sound — there's a couple of high hat noises on the original tape, but it's a shame you can't go CRASH! properly. Maybe this flaw will be corrected when Cheetah bring out a Hare Krishna drum kit . . . !

Ryk finds programming in 'real time' easier than editing the display to set up all the drums at once, especially when setting up drum-breaks. You can always delete beats later if you enter too many. He says that the best way to get the hang of the machine is to try to recreate the drum patterns from a particular song. It took Ryk an hour and a half to tap in Ultravox's *Vienna*.

I've been playing with a Specdrum for a couple of months now, and I'm hooked. In November I even tried to make a record using it, but luckily for the music industry I had to give the synthesiser back before I'd finished.

The Specdrum is a very professional gadget for £29.95, and certainly the best Spectrum peripheral since the Currah *Microspeech*. Microspeech was technically much more fiendish but you had to go looking for applications for it (besides insulting your friends at the press of a key), whereas Specdrumming is an end in itself.

I was a bit disappointed by the sounds on the Latin kit — most of them sounded as if they had been recorded in a kitchen and indeed I labelled my tape 'spoon hits bucket', 'shake jar of rice' and so on. That said, the kit editor (with its reverse-sound feature) is easily worth £3.99 on its own, and I may grow to like the new noises eventually.

I'm also looking forward to a 'full' cymbal sound, and some less tuneful toms (blap!) would come in hand for rock noises. It is a great pity that the system can't easily be transferred to Microdrive; the software takes a long time to load from cassette and you have to swap tapes half way if you want to use a kit of your own design. I think you'd need a 'magic button' type of disk system in order to use the device seriously on stage, but that may be an unfair criticism for a £29.95 Spectrum add-on — the performance is so good that it is tempting to judge the device by the standards of a professional drum machine.

The Specdrum is essentially quite simple — just a three channel port-mapped digital to analogue converter. What makes it powerful is the software, which is well designed and very efficient in its use of memory. In theory it should be possible to create your own sounds entirely under program control; Cheetah have told me that this is virtually impossible,

but I'm going to have a go anyway.
Watch this space . . .

KEY QUESTION

Colin Mason has written in asking why every game seems to use different control keys, and asking if it would be possible to produce a 'short amendment program' so that a joystick can be used with non-standard games. He has a Datel *Turbo Ace* joystick interface, and finds that many budget games ignore his stick.

Back in the olden days (1983) Kempston and AGF used to publish 'conversion tapes', but each program needed a different routine. You got half a dozen routines on each tape, so only the most popular games were featured.

Nowadays there are far too many games to make this approach practical, and in any case the increasing sophistication of games makes it harder and harder to tie a joystick in to every function. Hardware is now a better solution than software.

The Datel is quite a flexible interface; it can impersonate the popular Kempston 'standard', as well as the cursor keys and the less-common Sinclair Interface 2 scheme. It is worth playing around with the switch on the unit to see if your program supports one of these options — the Kempston one is particularly common, and some games allow it even though they do not say so on the screen. CRASH does try to help you by listing joystick facilities at the end of every game review. You're looking for any of the 'Sinclair', 'Cursor' (also called Protek/AGF) or 'Kempston' options.

Obviously, it is best to check whether or not programs will work with your joystick before you buy them, but this is difficult in some shops and it won't help you with the programs that you've already got. In that case you are best advised to get a programmable interface. These come in two varieties — the mechanical sort which you program by inserting plugs or clips in the appropriate places on a panel that mimics the keyboard, and the solid state variety that you program by pressing keys and pushing the stick in a given direction, simultaneously.

Both types are a bit annoying to use because you have to set them up before you play a game, but this only takes minute or so. The interfaces let you assign any direction (or fire) to any key and this should enable you to use any program that reads a small number of keys, whatever the keys may be.

Downsway and Stonechip used to advertise solid state interfaces, although their models have not been advertised recently and may be hard to find. Frel have cornered the market for mechanical interfaces: their Comcon interface costs a whacking £19.95, but it is fairly durable and has a through port so you can use the sound boosting features of the Turbo Ace at the same time. The only snag is that the Comcon won't work with the Quickshot 2 rapid fire option. Frel are at 1 Hockeys Mill, Temeside, Ludlow SY8 1PD. The standard Comcon won't work with the 128K machine (Frel will upgrade it for a fee of £4.00), but a new version which is compatible with both machines is on the way.



BLAST PAST

Several readers have written in about the BLAST Compiler from Oxford Computing Systems (Software) Ltd. The latest news is that OCS(S) has been forced to call in a receiver by debenture holders — people who lent money to the firm on the basis that they would be the first to get a refund if the company got into trouble. Don't confuse OCS with Oxford Computer Publishing, the people behind a range of business applications software — they're alive and well.

As I write, the Receiver is trying to sell the assets of Oxford Computer Systems — the BLAST BASIC compiler and a Pascal system for the Spectrum, plus several products for the Acorn and Commodore computers. We reviewed BLAST last year and found it a disappointment, but the signs were that OCS(S) were slowly getting the bugs fixed . . .

OC(S) will be liquidated unless someone steps in to rescue the firm. Liquidation would be bad news for readers with copies of their software, as there's not much chance that further bug-fixes and support would be forthcoming. Even if a buyer is found, the new owners may not want to look after the customers of the original firm, and they will not be obliged to do so. We'll keep you posted whatever happens.

FORTHWRITE ADVICE

Anthony Hollingworth has written in from Stockport to ask where he can get a book to teach him Fig Forth. He describes himself as the proud owner of the excellent *White Lightning* system from Oasis Software, and says that he needs a book on Forth in order to use the package to its full potential. Our tip is *An Introduction to Forth* by Leo Brodie — it's very expensive, at £16.50, but it is by far the best Forth book on the market. You should be able to order a copy from any good bookshop — the publisher is Prentice Hall.

NEW TECH

If all goes well I should be able to report on the internal workings of the Specdrum next month. I'll also give out the details of my composite video interface, and report on the nitty gritty of the Spectrum 128 hardware.

I'm surveying the murky world of programming contracts at the moment, and would be interested to hear from readers with good — or bad — experience at the hands of the software industry. But all problems and suggestions about things Spectrum-technical are welcome as ever. Write to TECH TIPS, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB

MERELY MANGRAM



Life is sometimes very trying indeed; early last year I get attacked by Derek Brewster for stealing his act — he gets a new style heading for the Adventure Trail; then, after ousting me from my Playing Tips position a year ago, Candystripes gets a new logo, after a lengthy period of whingeing. And to top it off the very next month he gets a magazine all of his own. By way of mollification, the Powers That Be have decided to move MERELY MANGRAM towards the end of CRASH and tuck it up to the regular preview pages. So at least I get a section to front as well as the forum. How long will it last, I ask myself, before Candy's manic demands for increased *Lebensraum* in the pages of the magazine result in yours truly being cast into the gutters of Ludlow followed by his Hermes?

Still, as you all know only too well, LM is not one given to wallowing in self pity. Soon the snowdrops and crocuses will be bursting forth on the lawns of my cottage and Spring will finally have sprung. Petty office politics will fade into oblivion once I can return to tending my flowers. Mind, the sudden splash of bright sunlight has already caused some flowers to uncurl; wonder school kid Robin Candy, rapidly heading for his final months at the Ludlow Institution, has recently been sporting a flashier (or more 'cool' as he would put it) look. The sun was a good excuse for a pair of those mirrored sunglasses that the ultra-cool like to hide their eyes behind. No one told the poor prannet that it's not a good idea to wear them ALL the while, and as a consequence of wearing them at night, he walked slap bang into a building and broke them. Very Cool. At least he was honest enough to own up!

Anyway, enough of this amusing banter, let's take a look at some of the games which should be bursting forth into the Spring software market before too long . . .

Hewsons are getting ready to pop a couple of releases onto the market. **Steve Turner** is currently putting the final touches to an arcade/strategy game by the name of *Quazatron* which features a scrolling 3D playing area and should be in the shops on 28th of this month.

An evil robotic-led culture based on the planet Quartech is working on the very sensible problem of eliminating the human race from the face of the galaxy. In the game, you take control of a droid, the **Meknotech**, and penetrate the underground robot city of Quazatron which is controlled by Logic Robots with the aim of subverting the city — Part One of the human fightback against droid domination.

The city is split into a number of levels consisting of ramps and pyramids connected by lifts and is patrolled and maintained by a variety of droids, including Service and Repair Mobiles and Battle Droids. Each enemy droid type is equipped differently, according to the function it was designed to fulfill, but as you might imagine most of the enemy robots are equipped with ordnance! Individual droids have a limited range of movement within the city, determined by their security codes, and their battle status is governed by the state of their on-board power units.

As a resistance fighter, the Meknotech has a fair amount of potential. Fitted with a limited range of weapons at the start of the game it stands a reasonable chance of success — but only if you can add the vital ingredients of human wit and ingenuity to the package will the Meknotech succeed in its mission and allow human government to be restored to the city.

Trundling the Meknotech around the cityscape, you come across the enemy droids as they go about their business. Shoot em up fans will no doubt take the obvious approach to Droid encounter and enter into laser battle immediately. The more thoughtful, strategic type of player may be tempted to engage the Droids in hand to hand combat — it's possible to subvert the enemy units and dismantle them which pays the dividend of upgrading the Meknotech: you get the pick of the bits from a dismantled droid.

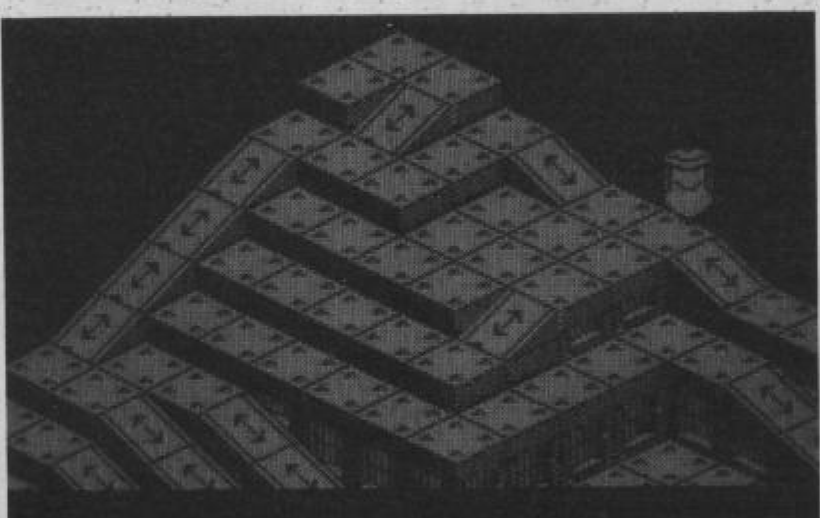
Your droid can recharge its power units by stealing energy from the power plates that have been placed around the city for the benefit of the locals, and meddling with the control consoles of Logic Robots gains intelligence on the strength and disposition of the enemy forces.

With experience, which will no doubt be gained after a fair number of games, you should build up a detailed knowledge of the weapons, shields, ram thrusters and security status of each of the droids in the game. Only then do you stand a chance of vanquishing the Great Ungreased Horde of robots that plan to eliminate humankind.

Still with **Hewsons**, word reaches me that 'Sphinx', previewed by no less than Roger (He darts between mags) Kean a few issues ago, has now acquired its official title and should be ready for launch in June under the name *Pyra Curse*. Programmers **Keith Prosser** and **Mark Goodall** are beavering away at Chateau Hewson and it looks like the final version of the game, in which you control a team of four explorers on the trail of a missing archaeologist, should contain over 500 3D screens to wander around in.

Compilation tapes are certainly catching on. **Ian Stewart** of **Gremlin Graphics** is putting together a collection of CRASH Smashes, **War on Want** and the **Off the Hook** charity compilations are due out any day now while a new high in co-operation has been reached with **Hot Shots**. Four of the largest names in the industry, **Melbourne House**, **Firebird**, **Activision** and **Beyond** have joined forces to form a new compilation label to be known as THE FORCE. The first release on this new label is scheduled for 24th March: called *Hot Shots* the cassette is to sell for £9.99 and for that you get *Mindshadow*, *Shadowfire*, *Gyron*, and *Fighting Warrior*.

The co-operation stretches further than simply agreeing to share tape space on a cassette — Firebird is taking care of the accounts, Melbourne House is looking after the distribution and Activision hold overall responsibility for making things happen. Further releases are scheduled for The Force, including collections of brand new games by new authors and a mega compilation for Christmas which, it is claimed, 'will be the meanest compilation yet'.



A screenshot from QUAZATRON, Steve Turner's current project for Hewsons. The picture was taken at a very early stage in the game's development, but Steve has now written an enormous amount of code and is just pulling the whole game together. The Meknotech is perched on the left-hand side of the pyramid, in case you were wondering.

With the demise of **Adventure International**, fans of **Scott Adams** adventures may be forgiven for feeling a little glum. Fear not, US Gold have stepped into the breach and should be continuing the *Questprobe* series with an adventure starring The Human Torch and The Thing during March. US Gold are also behind **Adventuresoft**, a brand new company. Adventuresoft's first game is set on a *Rebel Planet* where you must try to join the resistance movement, piece together codes and help force the Arcadian Empire to release its grip on the galaxy. No firm news on the release date for that one, so far.

Michael Baxter of Solutions Public relations slips an interesting phrase into a press release which arrives moments before press time. He describes a game as being 'entirely scrolling'. He's referring to the long overdue release from **Micro Power**, *Dr Who and the Mines of Terror*, which was launched before Christmas (our man in London, John Minson, attended the launch but lost his copy in a drunken haze — the sort of common occurence you expect from a big city Lounge Lizard).

As per usual, the Doctor is fighting the Master who's out to dominate the universe — this time by building a time-instant replay unit. The Time Lords have asked the Doctor to nip along to the planet Rijan, where the Master has his workshop, and they've thoughtfully provided our hero with a programmable droid cat called Splinx.

March 17th is the appointed day, and providing there are no more problems with the Tardis, Dr Who, the Splinx and you should be able to explore the hundred plus screens, which include mine-works, a reactor, a lift shaft and a monorail — all entirely scrolling, of course.

MANGRAM MERELY MANGRAM

A 'Spectrum Spectacular', a 'definitive one man army' is how **Alligata** describe *Who Dares Wins II* in their announcement that that the game is due in the shops on 24th March. Selling for £7.95. The game did well in its Commodore and Amstrad incarnations, and should keep shoot em up fans happy on the Spectrum if Alligata's expectations for the game are fulfilled.

Alligata's budget label, **Budgie**, has just released *Labyrinthion*, £2.99's worth of arcade adventuring in the mould of *Wizard's Lair*. A full review of the game may well appear elsewhere this issue, deadlines permitting, but at first glance the game certainly seems jolly. You stomp round the labyrinth of death looking for nine parts of a sacred scroll and are beset by a variety of unco-operative beasties on your journey — nothing wildly new, but bound to be fun if you like that sort of thing.

On a slightly more serious note, **Softek** (remember them before they bifurcated into The Edge?) are pleased to be able to announce the launch of their super word processor, *The Writer*, which is due for both the 48 and 128 Spectrum on 12th March. *Artist II* is on the cards for an April launch — so no doubt our Tech Niche teamsters will have lots of interesting new software to play with in time for next issue . . .

Martech, the people behind *Zoids* and *Geoff Capes Strongman* amongst other games, have bounced into the poker simulation stakes with an upfront licensing deal involving Sam Fox and her digititised charms.

Apart from the bolt-on goodies offered by Sam, the poker game itself is claimed to be very smart indeed, featuring a fair smattering of artificial intelligence and some cunning programming techniques. You're up against three poker players in the Seven Card Stud version on one side of the cassette, and each of them has his own personality, playing preferences and bluff factor. They can even 'remember' your style of play, which should add a fair bit of challenge to the game.

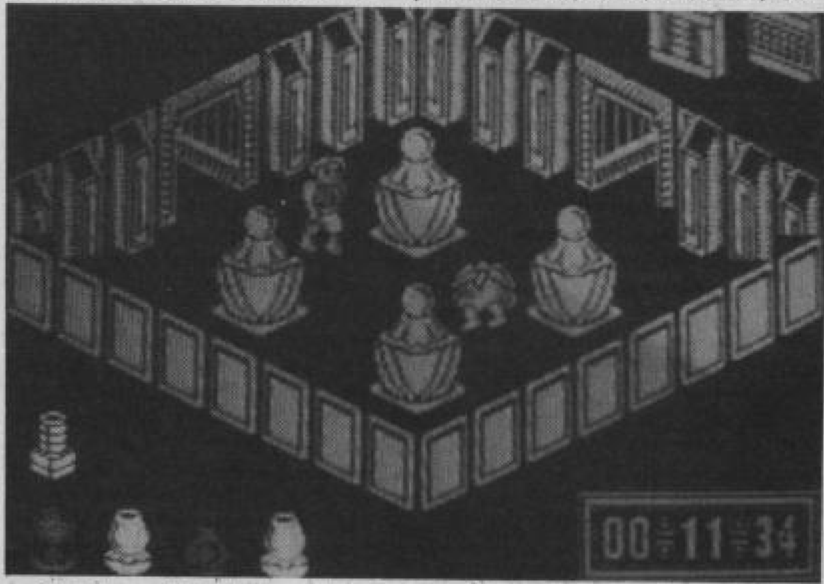
The other side of the cassette, featuring our Sammy, presents a very different challenge — but she's no pushover Martech claim, and a fair old bit of card playing skill will be needed before her clothes start littering the bottom of your Spectrum screen.

Ardent poker players will no doubt derive hours of pleasure from *International Seven Card Stud*, while Sun Readers might be able to catch a glimpse of one of their heroines as never seen before, courtesy of Martech's *Sam Fox's Strip Poker*. Both programs appear on one cassette scheduled for release in mid-March for £8.95.

On a slightly more cerebral, (or should that be celestial?) level, Martech are working on a game with **Heather Couper**, President of the British Astronomical Association. Called *The Planets*, this new work is an icon driven game involving over 125K of code.

Life on Earth is coming to an end, according to the scenario; the year is 2007 and climatic conditions on the surface of Planet Earth are fast becoming intolerable. The second Ice Age is well underway, following a series of natural disasters that have filled the skies with volcanic dust and led to earthquakes galore. An alien life force sends a capsule to Earth which contains a map of the solar system, revealing the position of eight more capsules, one each for Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus and Pluto.

Then a radio signal from deepest space is received, recorded and identified as a computer program. Once the program has been loaded into a computer a strange game is revealed which has no inlay card — without instructions or rules it is impossible to play, but the game is obviously very significant.



At this stage, you become involved as the pilot of a shuttle sent into space to retrieve the eight capsules marked on the alien map. On the one hand, you will be playing a game, zooming round the universe on the trail of the eight capsules which hold the key to the survival of humanity. During play, however, you will enjoy much more than the game, Martech promise, as you are taken on a guided tour of the Universe.

Heather Couper has been working with Martech's programmers to make sure that the information the game contains is as up to date and accurate as possible — even the data sent back from Uranus by Voyager 2 has been incorporated into the model of that far-flung planet.

Using a mobile hand as the cursor to select icons around the main viewscreen, you travel between planets in the solar system attempting landings during the arcade section of the game and can call up a range of information to help in your quest for the eight capsules. Clues and objects gathered on the way can be examined with the SEARCH icon, a computer is on hand to assist with travel to other planets and helps you use a landing craft and information on the constitution of a planet's atmosphere and surface material can be called up from the SAMPLE icon. Long and short range maps are available as is information on the planets you visit, including general descriptive material about the kind of life forms that might survive there, the gravity, radius and a host of data generally only available in astronomy textbooks.

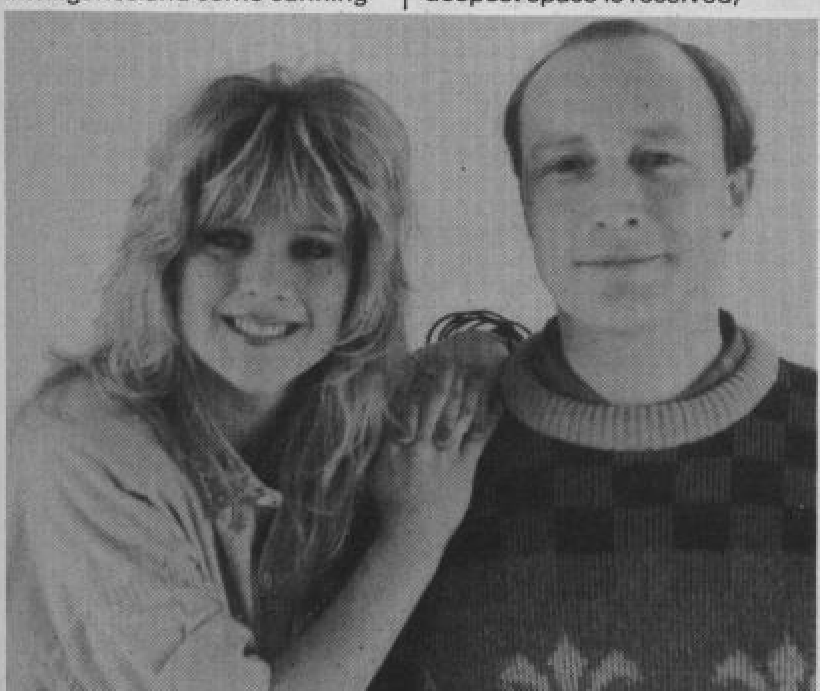
While *The Planets* is first and foremost a game, it certainly sounds like a fun way to learn without really trying!

The poor old *Incredible Shrinking Fireman* may have got lost in the post on his way from **Mastertronic** — our review copy although promised, didn't arrive in time for this issue. Good news though, for *Action Biker* did make its way through in time, though. Mastertronic are so impressed with the success of Clumsy Colin's debut that they are releasing *Action Biker 2* in time for Easter. That's all I've heard, mind, so you'll have to wait for more details . . .

Although **Mike Daniels** from **Global** did promise to visit the Editor the other week bearing an early copy of *The Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* he may have been scared off by the shiny red Dr Marten's boots Graeme wears while making Tomato Wine, so we haven't seen anything redder or mushier than the 'Best Guernsey Toms' on the stalls in Ludlow market. (Which now happens outside owing the imminent total collapse of the huge Victorian edifice known as Ludlow Town Hall, now barricaded off behind giant hoardings lest lumps of falling masonry bounce off worthy Ludlovian heads).

But I digress. Wimp Plasbott, hero of the game, finds himself alone in a deserted tomato processing factory which supplies the nation's Pizza Parlours with tomato puree — a commidity in rapidly diminishing supply. (Odd, no mention was made of this during the local drama society's production of Mr Macaroni and his Exploding Pizza Pie which I took in at the Town Hall a month or so ago! The performance was probably responsible for the Town hall's current sad state).

Mr Daniels assures me by way of written communication that Wimp should be starring in the computerised version of the film voted 'Worst Vegetable Movie of All Time' by the end of March. The game apparently features unique **Vege-tation** programming techniques and is guaranteed free of artificial colourings, preservatives, Kung Fu masters, magicians and dragons. Tomatoes have



MERELY MANGRA



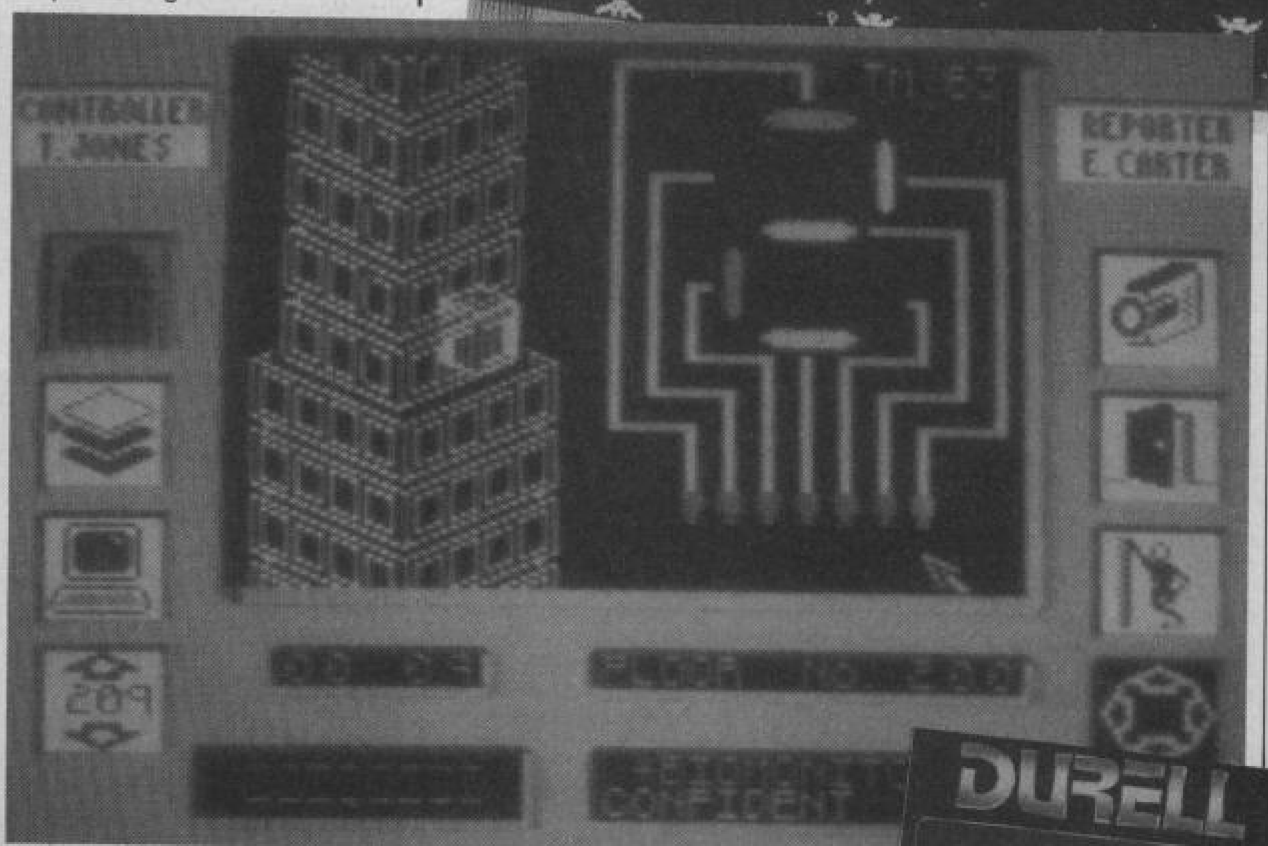
figured before in a game — remember that classic from Kuma called, if memory serves, *Vegetable Crash*?

Early details of **Mirrorsoft**'s continued program of Spectrum releases passes across my desk, including a few brief words about *Reflex* which takes you into a labyrinth of caves and tunnels and should involve the player in 'high speed action' and 'infinite levels of difficulty', in pursuit of an as yet un-named task; *Nervous Wreck* which plonks you firmly in a wet zone, as a diver trapped in an underwater hell who must construct a submarine from available wreckage in order to escape to the surface and *Strike Force Harrier*, the Spectrum version of Mirrorsoft's combat-and-flight simulator. Further details of these Spectrum games will be available towards the end of April, I am assured — meanwhile feast your eyes on the taster of *Dr Blitzen and the Islands of Arcanum* which appears a few short pages hence.

A slightly frantic communication was passed to me from **Stewart Green** of **Data Design Systems**, a new software house based in Halesowen, West Midlands. Stewart has just released a compilation of half a dozen games on a cassette which comes in a giant box 'specially designed to hold two cassettes and a Mars bar'. I looked, and found one cassette and no Mars bar — which is not surprising but a bit disappointing as they help you work, relax and play.

Chocolate sweeties through the post seems to have been a recent development — to tickle the reviewing taste buds, **Mikro-Gen** attached Bounty Bars to their *Three Weeks in Paradise* press releases. Mysteriously all we saw of them was the ripped bit on the release where they should have been, and the discarded wrappers. All became clear when **Mikro-Gen** sent no less than three separate press releases promoting *Battle of the Planets* with a mini Milky Way attached to them, Office Gannet Roger Kean tripped round the desks in CRASH Towers prizing the choccy comestibles (LMLWD) from each release and cramming them into his mouth. When the rest of the editorial staff arrived to complain about their loss, 'I was hungry' was his only line of defence. No doubt he was hungry the other day when Stewart's compilation tape and Press Bribe arrived in the office.

Mars bar or no Mars bar, the offer of six games for £4.50 by mail order certainly sounds reasonable — but their late arrival meant all I could do was pass them onto Cameron, our photography person for a quick photocall while I finished this column off and sent it to the typesetters. Next issue, we'll take a closer look at Data Design Systems' products, and a few more too, poorly Spectrums willing. I think they must be planning their summer holidays at the repairer's the way they keep breaking down . . .



PLUS SOME BITS AND PIECES FROM MY OFFICE RECORDS . . .

Ocean are releasing *Batman* (and super cool Robin no doubt), I think there's an ad in this issue, and their telly spin off *V* is imminent. A game that did tremendously well on the 64, *Bounder* from **Gremlin Graphics** is being converted and should be due soon. There's still no sign of *The Young Ones* from **Orpheus**, or indeed of their shoot em up 'Impossible Mission' type game *Tujad*. A surprise Sunday afternoon visit from **Andrew Onions** of **Realtime** confirmed that *Starstrike II* has been a little delayed — no review this issue but should be out by the time you read this — they've made a few changes in the game as described in the preview last month. (An irrelevant, but interesting, snippet is that although Realtime are based in Leeds, Andrew's father lives in Ludlow and he has just finished doing up a rather marvellous flat in the town which is being rented by several of the ZZAP! 64 reviewers. They're moving in as I write this, and taking with them their recently purchased Stargate Defender arcade machine which has been tempting everyone in the office to relax and play rather than work).

Electric Dreams are still busy with the conversion of their Amstrad hit *Spindizzy*, while *Back to the Future* is still well in the future. **Durell**'s *Turbo Esprit*, which was mentioned in our Durell profile in the February issue, is now imminent, and **US Gold** is keeping us on a knife edge of anticipation with *Legend of Amazon Women* (great ad huh?), *Goonies* and *Pentagram*. It should be sometime in March for the release of the Spectrum *Rock and Wrestle* from **Melbourne House** — interestingly, their front lady, Paula Byrne, has left to take up a new post at **Rainbird**. **Virgin** reckon *Dan Dare* will be out during April, and *Shogun* during March.

Rumours tell me to expect a new game from **Vortex** due at the end of March/early April, but I've no more details whatsoever other than we should be visiting Luke Andrews between now and next ish to find out. *The Hive* is coming from **Firebird**. A swarm of alien creatures has invaded





Earth, It's your job to enter their hive — a 3D tunnel/maze in search of their queen. **Richard Shenfield** (on the cover a while back) is doing the graphics, and he's well into interesting things like 3D TV and so on. Should be interesting. *The Force* from **Quicksilva** has been launched for the Commodore — John Minson went and reports in his one page London correspondent bit in this issue. Still no firm news on *Max Headroom*'s arrival in its finished form however, but it should be soon? **Ocean/Imagine** intend offering us *Superbowl*, *Knight Rider* (really?), *Ping Pong*, *Street Hawk* (heard of that one before), *Comic Bakery* and a combat game called *Green Beret* over the next few months. And finally *Scalextric* from **Leisure Genius** is still coming out one day on Spectrum — no idea of the date yet though.

And that's it for this month!

OUT OF THIS WORLD!



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WORK IN PROGRESS

A LOOK AT SOME IMMINENT RELEASES

MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

As you read this Gargoyle Games are beavering away in Dudley, putting the finishing touches to an adventure game with a very different graphical approach.

Set in a large dungeon containing some two hundred and fifty locations, *Heavy on the Magick* relies on an impressionistic graphic style to display the playing area. Your character, not yet finally named but currently going under the nom de program of AXIL, will be twelve characters high (no radical departure from the Gargoyle style here). However, constant, minute movements such as the ruffling of AXIL's cloak in the draught should create a subtly different impression of the scene which a static photograph cannot convey.

Greg Follis treated us to an early peek at the game — he's not entirely sure that final version will contain graphics identical to those we were shown: they are still being fine-tuned. He explained that the view of the playing area on screen allows the player to look into the current location from the south. Movement between locations will be achieved via short corridor or stairway sequences rather than with a flip screen technique and Greg's overall aim in designing the gameplay has been to avoid the frustratingly unhelpful "You can't do that"s and "I don't understand"s which crop up with monotonous regularity in most adventure games.

Whatever you attempt to do in the game, something will happen. If, for instance, the exits from the current location are north and south and you try to go west, rather than coming up with a stock "can't go that way" response, AXIL stumps off to the west, comes up against a blank wall, turns to face you on the screen and shrugs, indicating that there is no exit that way. Similarly, the spells you have to hand at the start of the game have to be mastered. While you are learning to use the magic, if you miscast a spell somthing will happen. It won't be the the RIGHT thing, but the spell still works.

The aim of the game is straightforward enough. The hero has been transported from the middle of a quiet session in the Golden Thurible, a cosy hostelry in the Northern Icemark to a very deep, dirty and generally unpleasant dungeon underneath a castle by the name of Collodon's Pile. Axil is a bit of an amateur magician, you see, and he was having some fun baiting Therion, a Tenth Degree Master magician. Being rather short tempered, Therion has given AXIL a problem to keep him occupied — transported to the dungeon in the land of Graumerphy, AXIL has to escape.

There are three possible escape routes from the dungeon — one exit leads into the castle, another leads to the Tombs of Taro while the third leads to an area of land outside the castle. Gargoyle plan to produce further modules for each of these escape routes — so with luck, you should be able to continue your escapade once the dungeon under Collodon's Pile has been mastered.

To make life difficult for Axil, Therion has introduced a variety of demons and monsters into the dungeon, and the problems that have to be solved will no doubt bear the Gargoyle trademark of trickery. Combat is achieved with magic and the game uses the Fighting Fantasy technique of controlling scraps, involving Stamina, Skill and Luck points generated at the start of the game for Axil and displayed in the right-hand window at the bottom of the display. This window is also used to reveal the status ratings of the creatures encountered in the dungeon.

The window at the bottom left of the display can be toggled between a description of the current location, a list of exits available and the inventory, while the central area is reserved for text input and output.

Heavy on the Magick promises to be an adventure with several differences — not just from Gargoyle's previous games — and should be in the shops towards the end of April.



Axil stands on the west side of one of the locations underneath Collodon's Pile with a chest to the east. An early look at Gargoyle's HEAVY ON THE MAGICK

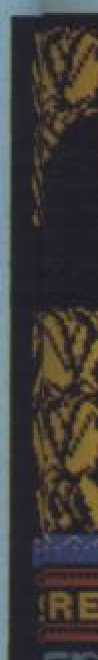
DYNAMITE DAN'S VINYL ADVENTURE

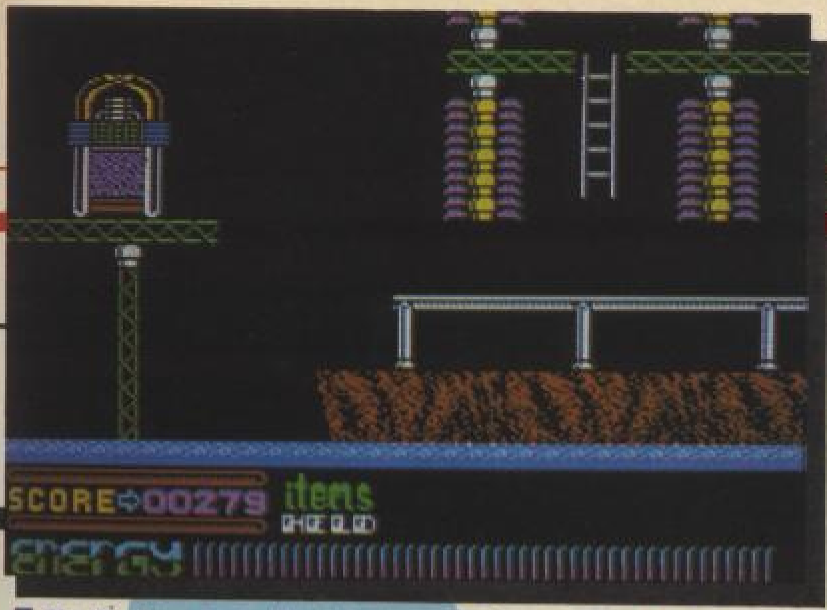
Dr Blitzen and the Islands of Arcanum is the continuation of the saga of Dr Blitzen and his feud with Agent Dan which began in *Dynamite Dan*. After the many trials and tribulations suffered by agent Dan in his first adventure, the poor action-packed sprite is one more pitted against the evil Dr Blitzen, a not very nice guy with a not very nice plan.

You thought the evil Doctor's last plot was dastardly? Well his latest is even worse. It may come as a bit of a surprise, but when your parentals and grand-parentals moan and whinge about pop music being evil, they're a lot closer to the truth than they could ever suspect. You see, over the past few years the despicable Blitzen has infiltrated and corrupted the vinyl manufacturing industry.

Under the Doctor's orders, all vinyl that is produced for record manufacture has been specially treated so that subliminal sound waves are produced when it is turned into a record and played. These subliminal noises drain the mind of anyone in earshot. Once the world's record-listening youth has been reduced to babbling mindless creatures, Dr Blitzen reckons that world domination will be a relatively easy thing to achieve. Pretty dastardly eh?

Well his plot has been discovered and the authorities decide that after performing so well against the Doctor in the past, Agent Dan is the man to be sent on the search and destroy mission to close down Blitzen's vinyl production plant. Naturally





The Wurlitzer look-alike jukebox to be found on the islands in Rod Bowkett's latest game DR BLITZEN AND THE ISLANDS OF ARCANUM

the evil Doc reckoned that Dan would be sent after him once his plot was rumbled, so he has protected the the vinyl plant with a secret eight letter password.

Dr B has annexed a group of eight islands as his Headquarters. One each island he has installed a jukebox, and to release each letter in the password the appropriate disc has to be found on each island and played on the jukebox. The whole password is constructed by stringing together the first letters of the eight tunes that each jukebox plays. Easy? Well no, there are dastardly inventory-stealing aliens and the dreaded Doctor himself with his despicably disabilitating ray gun to contend with on your quest.

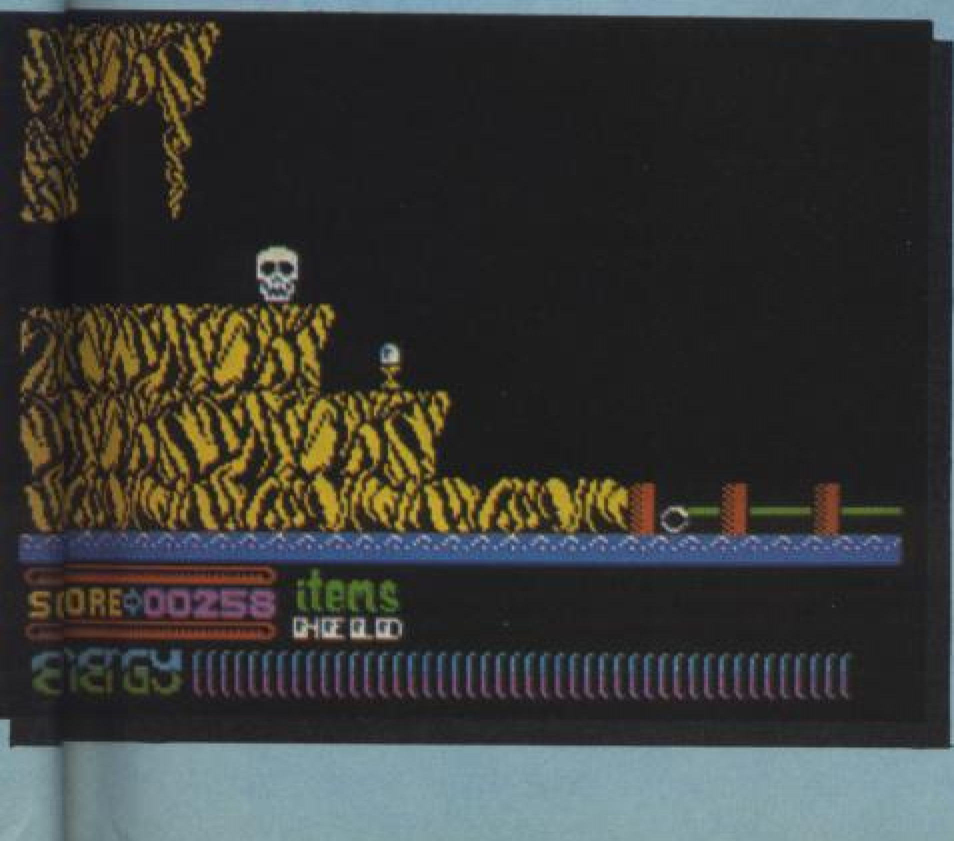
That's the scenario; the game itself takes a somewhat similar format to it predecessor, *Dynamite Dan*, with the little hero leaping manically from platform to platform. *Dr Blitzen and the Islands of Arcanum* was in a very early stage when we caught sight of it — the graphics were very near finalisation but practically no gameplay was present at time of going to press.

As with *Dynamite Dan*, *Dr Blitzen* was written by Mirrorsoft freelancer, Rod Bowkett. A trained musician, Rod soon discovered the joys of computing after purchasing a ZX Spectrum. The astoundingly stylish graphics with a very *art deco* look are immediately impressive — very pretty indeed, especially the code-holding jukeboxes, which have a very authentic Wurlitzer look to them. No doubt the music, too, will be impressive.

This time Mr Bowkett is going to be able to cram a lot more into the game as compared with *Dynamite Dan* owing to the improvement in his programming skills. The eight islands of Arcanum will comprise around two hundred screens of varied and interesting scenery. Another improvement on the *Dynamite Dan* is a positive progression in the gameplay department. After all is said and done *DD* was merely a very good platform game. *Dr Blitzen* involves quite a few adventure elements to make things quite a bit more interesting and enhance it's long term appeal.

Mirrorsoft's latest game should be in the shops towards the end of April, or early May time at £7.95 . . . a full review will follow in due course.

LMLWD says that 'arcanum' means a mystery or secret. There's at least eight secrets in the Mirrorsoft game — the elements of the password . . . And here's a ninth. Who lived in that skull?



TIGER SET TO EXPLODE INTO SPECTRUM



Following Sean Masterson's trip to Sheffield involving imaginary A roads which led him to Gremlin Graphics and a peek at Way of the Tiger trilogy in a very early form, we can now reveal the later stages of the game.

Demo tapes arrived in CRASH Towers and were eagerly loaded. This is what we saw — and the three level scrolling technique produces a really stunning effect. Gremlin have promised to post a finished copy of the game to us soon, so providing the Post Office doesn't have A road problems, a full reveiw should appear next month. Meanwhile remind yourself of the goodies in store with a peek back at the February issue . . . .



Martech should soon be releasing THE PLANETS, a game which sends you on a quest through the Solar System on the trail of eight capsules. Heather Couper, President of the British Astronomical Association has been involved in the project, to make sure it is at up to date and accurate as possible. Lloyd has more to say about THE PLANETS a little earlier in the magazine.

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THE NEW IMAGINATION

Once Imagine of Liverpool and Ocean of Manchester were big rivals. After the spectacular collapse of the former, Ocean took over the title and material goods of Imagine to become undoubtedly one of the largest games software houses in Europe. Since then they have had their ups and downs, gaining a reputation for heavy promotion and for not always sticking to their release dates. In its time, Ocean has put out a mixed bag of games but has scored with many genuine successes and never been frightened off by difficult concepts like FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD. To investigate what the new Imagine is like and how it relates to its new parent, Julian Rignall went up to Manchester to chat to DAVID WARD and COLIN STOKES two of the men behind the hype.

Unlike the old Imagine's magnificent Liverpool edifice, Ocean's Manchester HQ in Central Street is surprisingly modest, both in size and appearance. It seemed appropriate that the first person I spoke to should be **Colin Stokes**, who had once been part of the old Imagine and I started by asking him whether the reputation of the original Imagine had caused any difficulties for Ocean, but he didn't think so. 'People didn't say, "let's hide. We don't want your products, we've already got thousands in our warehouse", they just took it as another opportunity to sell software and make a profit.

'Viewing Imagine as an experience, a sort of closed chapter, I found myself thinking "who else is going to be the the mega company." So when I went knocking on doors saying, "here I am, I'm an Imagine representative again," I didn't find one person who said "Well, I've got 10,000 *Whacky Waiters* in my warehouse. Can I give you them back before we talk?" It was all very friendly.'

But wasn't Ocean worried that the famous name carried a taint with it? Why buy it?

'You say, "what's up for grabs, is there anything which will be of use to us?". After all, with all the advertising, whether good, bad or indifferent, it was a market name that was known and you have to have been on Mars not to have known the name of Imagine, so it was already established. The difficulty was whether you considered it as a Titanic — was it worth raising or not?'

Certainly the first game Ocean released under the new Imagine label **was** worth it, as Colin recalls. '*World Series Baseball* was a good product and that was one of the games made available by the liquidators — there wasn't another like it around — the graphics were very good. Then *Hypersports* came along which got good reviews.'

The whole thing took off very suddenly, though. There was no slow build-up and months of advertising as we have now come to expect. I asked Colin what was going on at Imagine during that period?

'I think that the hype was the actual link-up with the Ocean group and Konami. That really set the scene, because if everyone knew what Konami was all about they'd realise that there was some really high-calibre products amongst it all. When you do a deal you look at the goodies and the baddies. You always get one or two weak titles in a deal, but we looked at *Hypersports* as being the real blockbuster.'

Imagine produces virtually every game for the three main machines, Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amstrad. With so much product in the pipeline and each one being triplicated, Imagine must be facing all sorts of problems. What exactly goes on when a title is developed?

'We try to keep the best titles in-house so we can have a day-to-day viewing on how the programmers are getting on, but if you appreciate the size of our



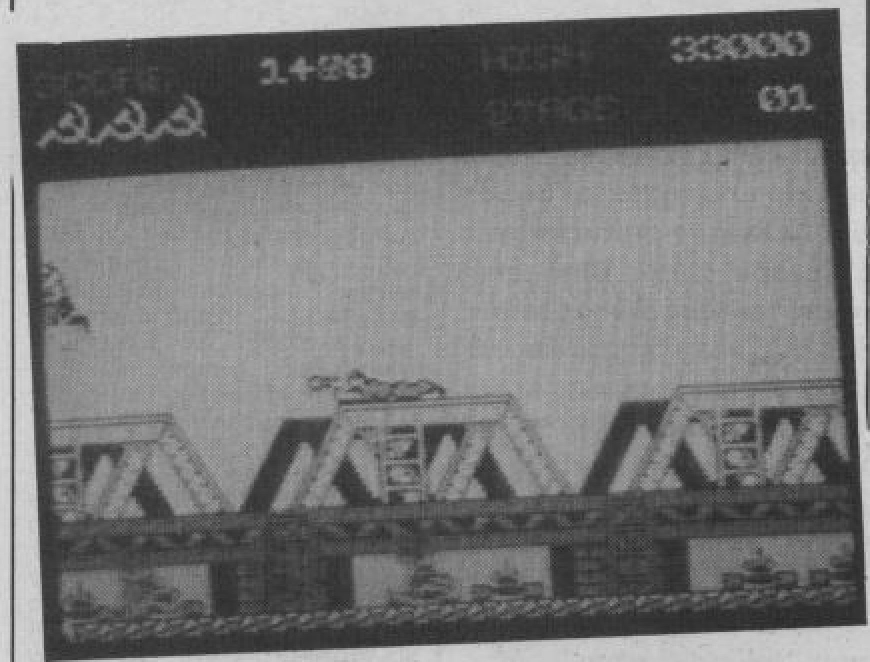
operation with US Gold, Imagine and Ocean you really do have to contract out. We have up to sixty programmers contracted out at one time which is very, very tough to co-ordinate. You take *Mikie*, *Comic Bakery*, *Ping Pong*, *Yie Ar Kung Fu* — on all three machines, twelve formats in all with sometimes two people working on a title, so already there are twenty four people working on those titles alone. It's quite a difficult thing to monitor!'

Ocean's managing director, David Ward, is evidently pleased that they act as a publishing and marketing house for so many varied programmers (Ocean were heavily responsible for helping Denton Designs get going), and he pointed out that this trend is escalating. 'Increasingly we find ourselves looking for people who like to call themselves software houses, but aren't interested in actually marketing the game. So they can be in Somerset, Scotland or wherever and we can publish the game for them. We must have programmers in just about every county in Britain.

'When we started in the old days of mail order where you put an advert in *Your Computer* and waited until the next Tuesday and hoped there would be some replies, put them in a jiffy bag and off they'd go, at that time programmers would be working in their attic after school, but now it has become far more sophisticated. First we got about twenty people aboard, and most of them stuck with us. My guess is that by Christmas we'll have about 100-120 programmers working for us, especially now with all the Ultimate games, Ocean's bigger title range and Imagine's arcade label. You see, while we're open for people to be able to walk in the door we're always open for new ideas. The programmers and coders are the creative aspect of the industry — anyone can go around licensing titles. What you have to have at the end of the day is some sort of intellectual property which we then publish.'

But licenced arcade conversions bring with them their own problems, as Colin pointed out. 'The hardest thing is reference — for example *Yie Ar Kung Fu* was referenced directly from the arcade machine.' This means the programmers actually have access to an arcade machine in their offices, but if a development team on another machine happens to live in Scotland, then as soon as the in-house team have finished with the arcade machine, it has to be shipped off. The delays start . . .

How about *Knight Rider* and *Street Hawk*, I wondered, and asked Colin what had happened to them?



One of the current Kjonami conversions currently underway at Chateau Imagine — GREEN BERET. It's a combat game viewed from the side rather than above

'With a conversion you designate three months, give or take a few weeks, and, unless there's a major bug found, twelve weeks usually suffice. The guy who was doing it spent three months, then four, then five. Now, what do you do as a commercial company? What happens is that you have to gear your advertising to the date that the programmer tells you. You go up and book X amount of space in magazines, and you've got the programmer sitting there and you say, "do you promise that the game is going to be finished by then?" and he says, "no problem." What are you supposed to do? There are only a limited amount of carrots that you can dangle in front of them.'

One programmer, it seems, became so fed up with his assignment that he asked to be removed from the project after four months delay. His removal, however, led to new programmers having to entirely rewrite the code, starting all over and causing more delays. As Colin said, 'It doesn't do the company or our image or relationship with the big stores one iota of good. We're always very susceptible to this sort of situation. *Knight Rider* and *Street Hawk* were the same.

Colin emphasised the size of their forthcoming schedule; *Ping Pong*, *Superbowl*, *Batman*, *V*, *Green Beret*, *Knight Rider*, *They Sold a Million II* and *Street Hawk*!

'As you can see,' he added optimistically, 'it's quite a task really, but we'll pull through!'

Another arcade game finding its way onto the Spectrum at IMAGINE: PING PONG, again from Kjonami



With arcade conversions, it seems they are not very free to interpret the originals, on this point Colin was firm. We're not allowed to be distracted from the original. We do have to follow the program exactly and can't say, "this is a little weak in this section let's change it".'

I asked whether the programmers felt tied down by this rather hefty ruling?

'Yes, they do. The contract that we have is obviously very lucrative, Konami are the best for arcade programs and we're very glad to be on board with them. So if part of the deal is that you produce the product as per original we're pleased to do so. We're just a vehicle for converting the games to the home micro, we can't show our own expression, that's the deal. The programmers come in and say, "I'd like to do this and that," but if it distracts from the original I have to answer no. We can't produce a game until they (Konami) have looked at it. It can have you sitting on the edge of your seat in fact!'

Conversions aren't everything, however, in fact the CRASH Smashed *Movie* was a surprise event, as Colin explained. 'The programmer originally came over to Britain from Yugoslavia to see Bug-Byte because they owed him some royalties, but when he knocked on their door it was all barred up with a sign saying closed. It was suggested to him that he should come up here to see whether we could help him out in any way and he came up with two quite abysmal products. I felt sorry for him because he didn't even have his plane fare home so I took them off him just so he could get home. Because we'd been kind to him he felt obliged to us and we got a parcel through the post. I looked inside and said, "wow, this will do very nicely thank you!" I phoned him up and we made a deal over the phone!'

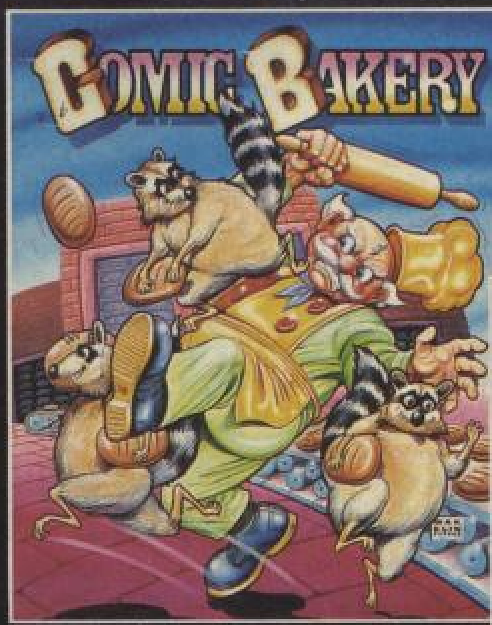
Movie is the name of an original game, but to Ocean/Imagine the game is in licensing, and many future plans lie in film tie-ins — *Rambo* was a classic example. How difficult is it to grab the rights? 'I'm afraid it's a boring answer, it's a question of strength. If you go to the agent and say we want to produce a game we have to assure them that we're not going to bring our friend with the muscles down and because of the size of the company and the market presence you stand more of a chance pitching in and getting it than a lesser company.'

So how do Ocean and Imagine see the future? David Ward: 'We're always trying to broaden our horizons of both the type of games we sell and the age group we're aiming at so we can get the largest possible audience.' Colin Stokes: 'It's a very fickle industry. There are no guarantees for the software houses and there are none for the distributors, so who would be brave enough to predict what's going to happen this time next year? After *Green Beret* is out of the way, we'll take a deep breath and look again. we've got enough plans to get us through to March 1987, it's just a question of how we go about it. You're only ever as good as the quality of your games and we have to move with the times.'

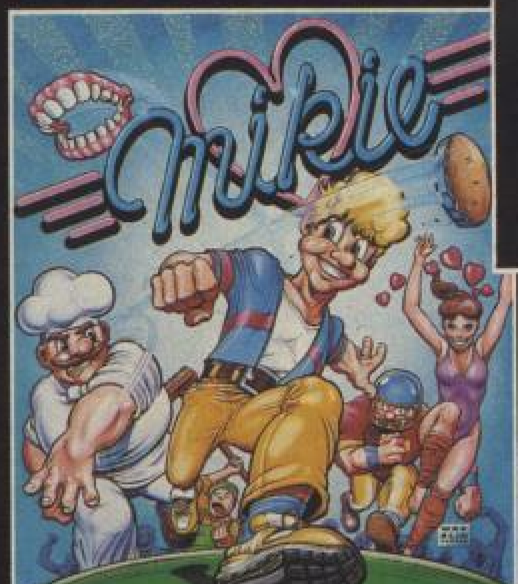
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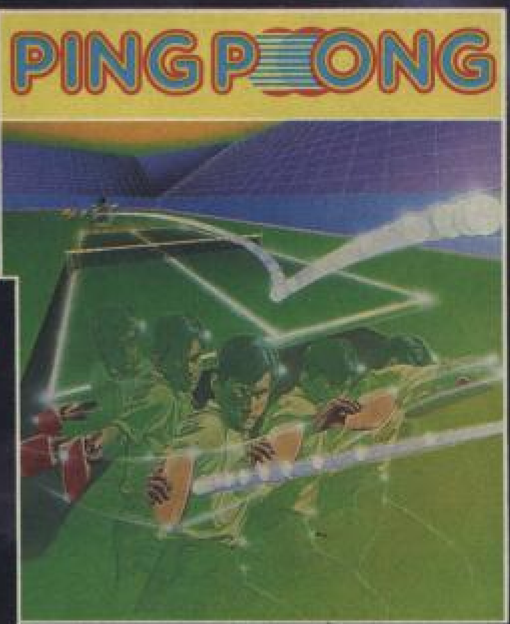
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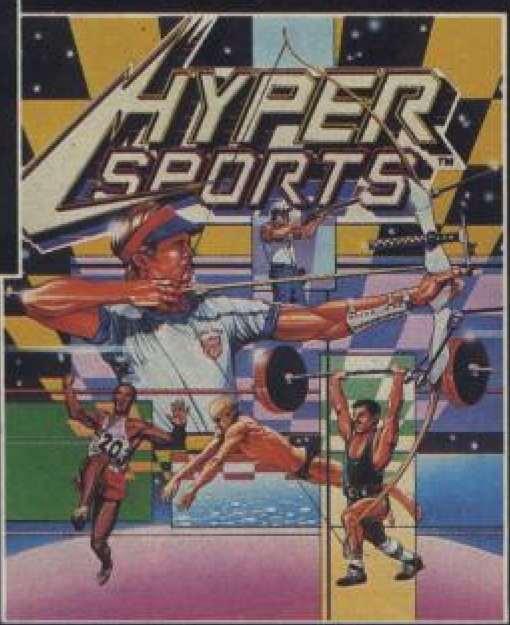
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WINTER SPORTS

Producer: Electric Dreams
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Software Images**

Electric Dreams have joined the Snowy Sports compilation market with *Winter Sports*, a collection of eight games on one cassette. The first part of the program to load presents a main menu screen listing the events. Pressing a number key puts the Spectrum into LOAD mode and the computer searches the tape until your chosen event is located and loaded. The menu screen also allows you to view the highscore tables. Record breaking scores during play are automatically included on the score tables and can be viewed before an event is loaded.

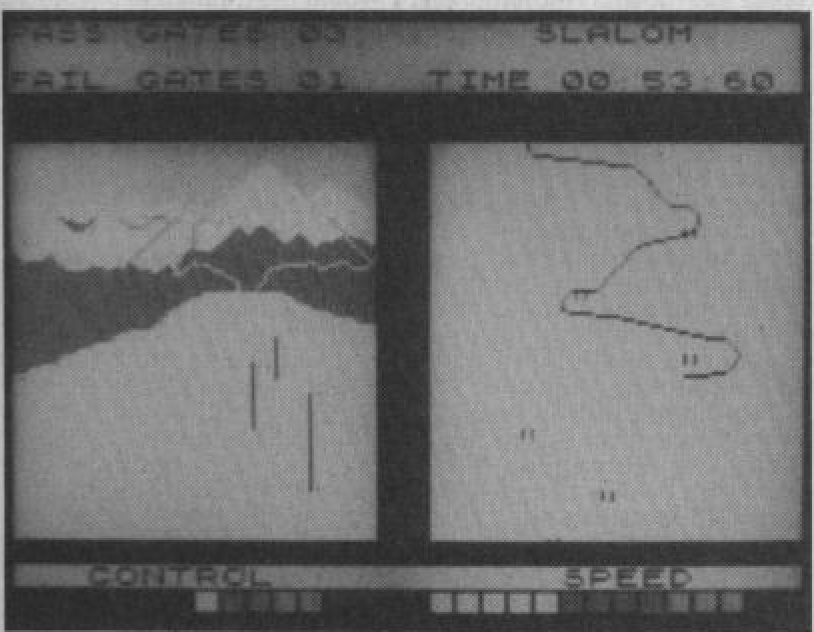
Once an event has loaded a further sub-menu screen is presented allowing keys to be defined; one or two player mode can be selected and further event options are input at this stage.

The first three events on the cassette, Downhill Skiing, Slalom and Giant Slalom are loaded in one go. They're all very similar, using identical controls and screen presentation. Two windows show the action: the one on the left gives a 3D skier's eye view of the course while the right hand window displays an aerial view. You can increase or decrease the skier's speed, and ski to the left and right. Bar graphs at the foot of the screen give a readout of your speed and indicate how sharply the skier is turning, while a scoring area above the windows indicates how many gates have been passed or failed and times the whole run.

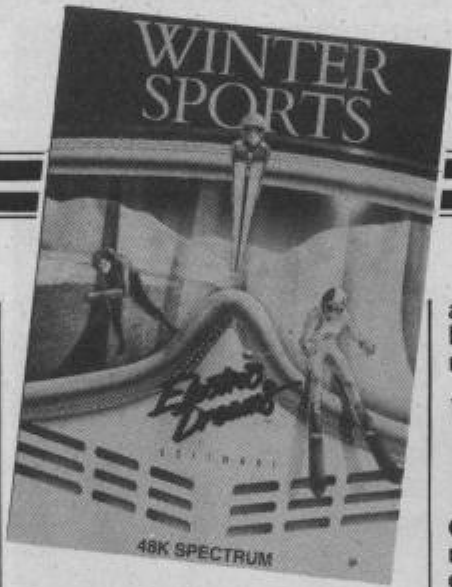
In all three events the object is to belt down the course as fast as possible without missing gates. In the Slalom the skier has to weave between the gates, passing to the right of the first gate, to the left of the second and so on, and any gates missed lead to penalty points. The Downhill is similar to the Slalom, except the skier has to pass between gates made from two poles, while the Giant Slalom is a mixture of the two events. Once the skier is through the finishing posts any time faults are added to the time taken to ski the course and an overall score is given.

Ice Hockey can be played as a two player game or against the computer. Most of the display is occupied by a 3D scrolling panoramic view of the pitch, and a scanner at the top of the screen shows the position of all the players on the full pitch. The player nearest the puck is automatically under your control and can be moved in four directions with the fire button used to shoot the puck. To tackle a player with the puck, just run into him. The match is played over four quarters lasting five minutes apiece with a change of end after each period.

In the Ski Jump the screen is split into two displays once again, with the left window showing the view from the top of the slope and the other giving a close up of the skier's profile in the air. The skier begins by sliding backwards and forwards at the top of the ramp — pressing Go when the skier is moving forwards begins the run and the player then has to guide the skier down the middle of the slope to gain maximum speed. If the skier deviates too much from the middle of the ramp then a sever loss of speed results. At the end of the slope another press of the fire button launches the skier into space. During flight the skier's balance must be maintained, using the skier Up and Down keys to avoid a tumble on landing. Marks are given for the length of the jump and for style while in the air.



The Slalom from Electric Dreams WINTER SPORTS. On the left is the skier's eye view while the right hand window gives an aerial view of your skier's progress



Next comes a whizz around an icy track — the Speed Skating. Another split-screen game with two views of the skaters: the window on the left gives the view from behind the skaters while the right hand window gives a side view of the track. Essentially it's a *Decathlon* type event where the onus is on bashing the left/right keys alternately gain speed, indicated by a bar display at the foot of the screen. Up and down keys are used to keep the skater in the designated lane since he has a tendency to stray off course slightly. At the start of the game the length of the race can be specified.

After whizzing around a track, why not zoom *down* one? The Bobsled event allows you to do just that. Yet again the event features two displays, a 3D view from the sled and a plan view of the track with a line plotting your course as you go down. The Bob has four controls: speed up; slow down; left and right. If you go into corners too fast, a crash is likely and the sled has to be banked on bends. Once again, bar graph readouts display speed and orientation of the sled.

The final event on the cassette is the Biathlon, a gruelling cross country test of stamina and shooting ability. The main display shows the skier and the landscape and a smaller screen above shows a map of the whole course and your position on it. Readouts at the bottom of the screen indicate your speed and stamina, and it is important to pace the event so that your skier doesn't run out of stamina before the course has been completed.

Rapid presses of the left/right keys sends the skier along until he reaches a shooting range. Here the screen switches to a 3D display of the four targets. A cross hair moves rapidly over each target in turn and the player has to press the fire button at the right moment to score a hit. The skier only has one shot at each and a miss constitutes a time penalty, so careful shooting is the key to this event. Once all four shots have been fired it's back to the cross country and more *Decathlon* stuff.

CRITICISM

● **" Sports games are not what I really like, and this game hasn't changed my mind at all. As I played it I realised that this has some of the most basic graphics I've seen for a while, and some of the games move really slowly from screen to screen. Colour is used well in places, but there's very little sound. Overall a game I wouldn't recommend you buy unless you've had a good look first. "**

● *" I was really looking forward to this new title from Electric Dreams as I imagined that they would have done a good job, but I was to be disappointed.* Winter Sports *has to be about the worst sports simulation that I have seen over the last six months. The graphics on all the events are large but undetailed. The sound, where there is any, is mainly unrealistic spot effects. The main fault of this game is its speed: with most of the events I was bored half way through my first go. Monotony set in quickly. Generally I wouldn't recommend this game as it is unplayable and monotonous. "*

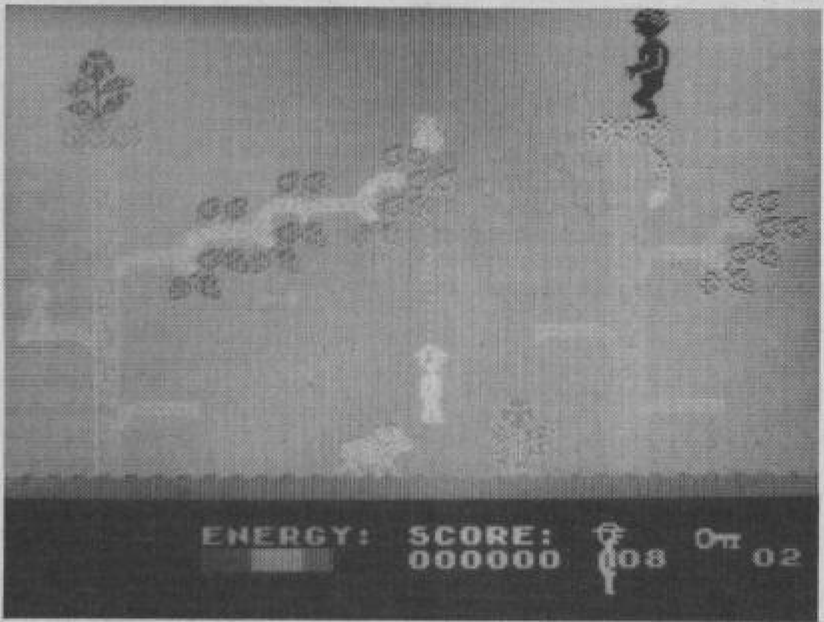
● " After playing *Winter Games* last month I thought that perhaps we were in for another wintry bonanza. Unfortunately it's not the case. Just about every event is incredibly slow to play and boredom set in about half way through each one. The multiloading is a complete pain in the backside and I found that I spent more time loading in each event than playing. Really, none of the events stand out as being any good and the tacky graphics, unimaginative sound and dull gameplay all add up to this being a complete waste of money. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: a bit sticky
Use of colour: very poor; dull
Graphics: just about average
Sound: squelchy
Skill levels: one
Screens: eight events
General rating: Very disappointing

Use of computer	57%
Graphics	47%
Playability	43%
Getting started	57%
Addictive qualities	39%
Value for money	39%
Overall	**43%**

RAIDERS OF THE LOST RING



Dangling from a rope just above a lion in RAIDERS OF THE LOST RING. A tricky moment indeed, but at least you've still got eight lives left

Producer: Arcade Systems
Retail price: **£5.95**
Author: **Mats Emilsson**

Legend tells of an ancient place of worship hidden in the jungle — a temple containing priceless treasures. Over the years many explorers have tried to recover the treasure, but all failed in the attempt. The entrance to the temple is guarded by natives who fire poison arrows at anyone approaching. Nobody has yet passed the portals of the temple known as Doom.

You've travelled to the jungle and want to grab the treasures for yourself, but are starting to get put off by the stories of the one-way journeys that your predecessors have taken. If you want to live long enough to collect an explorer's index-linked pension it would be sensible to avoid the Temple of Doom.

Unfortunately you haven't got enough money to cover the journey home. Finding the treasure is your only hope. Life is looking pretty bleak until a native offers to sell you a magical amulet that protects its wearer, allowing him to be 'killed' twenty three times before expiring. This is just the sort of comprehensive insurance policy you need before embarking on a treasure hunt in the Temple of Doom. So off you trot into the jungle a little poorer and clutching the magic amulet.

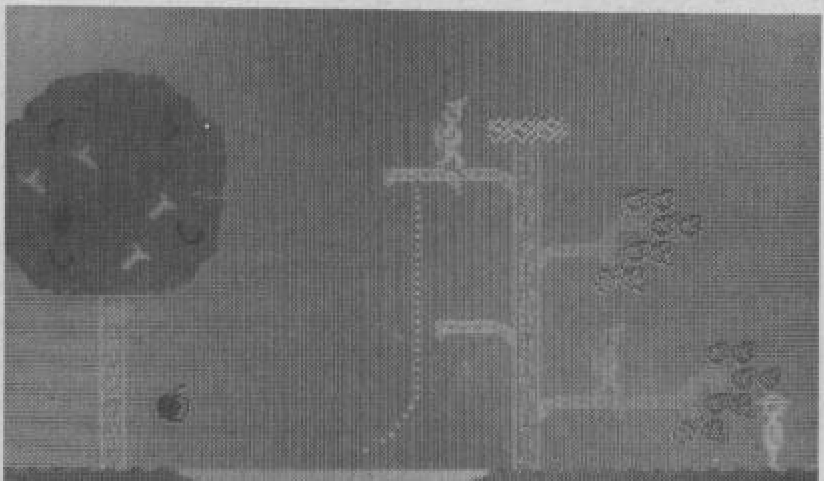
Apart from an Indiana Jones style hat, you have no useful equipment, and success depends on your running and jumping abilities. The jungle is split into screens, and each screen contains a key that is needed later on in your quest. To collect a key a fairly complex 'physical' puzzle has to be solved. The background is made up from jungly objects such as trees and swaying creepers. Most of these can be clambered over in real Johnny Weismuller style, using the left, right and jump keys.

Platforms are created by the branches of the trees, and swinging vines similar to the ropes found in *Jet Set Willy* abound. Once you're on a rope or creeper, pressing a direction key opposite to the direction in which the rope is swinging moves you up; using the key which takes you in the same direction as the rope's swing takes you down. The jump key allows you to let go — just like *JSW*.

The playing area is made up from flip screens and a new piece of scenery appears as you move off the edge of the current screen. All sorts of nasty thingies try to hinder and disrupt your progress. Tribal warriors trog along tree branches firing poisonous arrows at you. Apart from the archers, lions patrol patches of jungle and some of the trees contain people who hurl rocks in an awkwardly random way.

Touching a baddie or being hit by a weapon loses you a life . . . Remember — the amulet's only good for twenty three lives. Exploring takes it out of a chap, and a constantly shrinking bar reveals the drain on your energy. Fortunately, a munch on a piece of jungle fruit boosts your stamina.

If you survive the jungle hazards you enter the underground section of the game where different meanies and backgrounds are encountered. Scary things such as ghosts, spiders, stone throwing gnomes and all manner of death dealing obstacles try to thwart you in the Underground section, which is followed by The Ship, The Haunted House and The Pit. Just keep a tight hold on that amulet!



At the right of the screen, about to move on in RAIDERS OF THE LOST RING. Death is probably imminent as the amulet is only good for a couple more lives

CRITICISM

● **" AArrrggghhh! Not another *Jet Set Willy* copy! Okay, it's not identical, but it is similar enough to be pretty unoriginal. The graphics aren't brilliant, and the colour clashes like crazy. Sound is pretty BASIC and really there's nothing outstanding about the game at all. If it were a budget game, then maybe it wouldn't be so bad, but I'm afraid that to me, buying this for £5.95 would be money down the drain. "**



● *" Gosh! A JSW rip-off. I haven't seen one of these in ages. Don't be fooled by the obvious similarities like the swinging rope — this game isn't half as good. I would have expected to have seen the graphics in an average game early in 1983 — they are jerky and there's a lot of colour clash. Sound is virtually non-existent: only one tune, which is a great shame as it would have added to the atmosphere of the game. Gameplay is very slow which leads to the old complaints of boredom and monotony. It's infuriating, as well: losing a life means you have to spend ages tackling the same screen again. I can't recommend* Raiders.

● 'What an amalgamation of old material! There don't seem to be any orginal features in *Raiders of the Lost Ring*. The main format is very similar to *Jasper*. The swinging rope comes from *Jet Set Willy* and the game itself is just a platform game in the now bog standard, and extremely tedious, Matthew Smith format. The worse thing about this game is the terrible collision detection — it gets very annoying to have objects drift by you before they kill you. At the price I suppose it's not too unreasonable, but only if you like this sort of thing. I don't. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z left, X right, P jump, (L fire on some screens)
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: a bit sluggish
Use of colour: hardly state of the art
Graphics: a bit dated
Sound: minimal
Skill levels: one
Screens: unknown!
General rating: A passable game but a bit expensive given the dated format

Use of computer	41%
Graphics	43%
Playability	37%
Getting started	34%
Addictive qualities	37%
Value for money	39%
Overall	39%

SURFCHAMP

Producer: New Concepts
Retail price: **£11.95**
Author: **Mark Miller, Rokneddin Shariat, Anthony Kelly, Kieran McEnery**

Surfchamp is the first in a range of sports simulations due from a new software house based in Ireland — New Concepts. Apart from the usual program cassette, the package includes a plastic surfboard which fits over the keyboard of your computer pivoting on a little fulcrum fitted over the G key.

The simulation itself requires some knowledge of surfing and the terminology of the sport, and a tutorial program is included on the B side of the cassette. Loading the tutorial allows you to step through menus which lead to descriptions of the various moves that score points in the game as well as information on the selection of gear, a glossary of surfing slang, a history of surfing and twenty tips for safe fun in the surf.

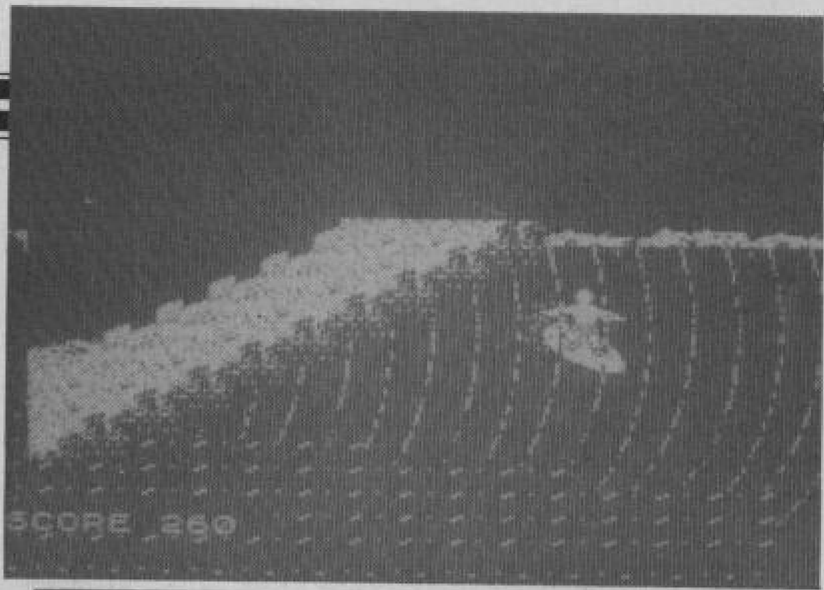
Before starting play proper, the program gives some information on the climatic conditions prevailing and then leads you through a set of options, requesting information on your age, sex, height and weight before allowing you to select the type of board and clothing you wish to take to the water. Each time the game is played the conditions change, and as in real life the best surfing is only to be had when the sea is good . . .

The final option in the menu allows you to specify whether you want to practise riding the waves or enter a competition. In practice mode you can select from ten speeds and surf away merrily, without running out of energy while you practise manoeuvres. In competition mode, competition rules apply and you get ten rides in which to build up a score — performance deteriorates as you get tired.

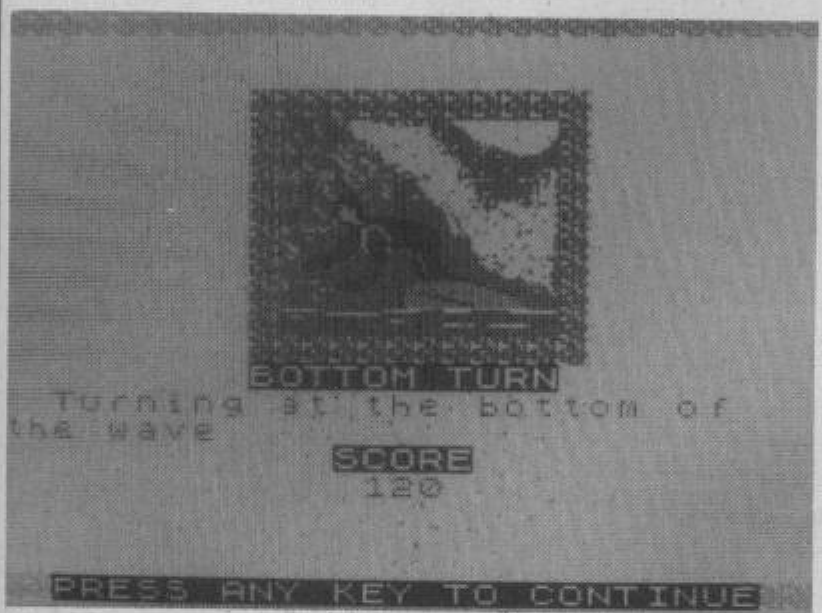
The game begins with your surfer on the beach, carrying a board. Pick a spot to enter the water, press down on the nose of the surfboard on your computer to leave the beach and paddle out to sea. A large surfboard in the sky gradually disappears as energy is used up — paddling the board gets tiring very quickly. Once a suitable spot in the sea has been reached, the next step is to turn round and wait for a wave. Pressing the 2 key puts your surfer onto the board, and catching a wave allows the real fun to begin.

Once a wave has been caught and the surfboard mounted the display changes to give a view of the wave you are riding with your surfer zooming along on the water. Using the surfboard overlay it's then up to you to attempt point-scoring moves as you ride the wave towards the beach. The board pivots about its centre and makes contact with some of the Spectrum's keys. As the little surfboard is tilted and slanted during play, the keypresses produced are translated in movement on screen. The aim of the game is to go for the highest score possible by assembling a routine of slick stunts. Your performance is governed by the type of wave you are riding, the choice of equipment and physique entered at the start, the weather, and the energy remaining — a tired surfer makes mistakes!

New Concepts have based this simulation on the conditions and seascape at Fistral Beach in Newquay, Cornwall during the 1984 World Championships. If you manage to master this particular beach, becoming a true Surfchamp, modules containing the data for other famous surfing haunts should be available in due course to test your skills to the limit.



Riding a wave in New Concepts' SURFCHAMP. Fast reactions and an understanding of the principles behind surfing is needed if you want to go for a high score



Inside the tutorial program — each manoeuvre is illustrated, described and the points it scores displayed. Lots of other tips and hints can be found on side two of the cassette.



CRITICISM

● **" While New Concepts have come up with a good idea, and have created a very interesting and different sports simulation, they should have paid more attention to the front end of the game. The instructions are very difficult to master, as is the game itself. If you are already a surfer, you'll probably drop straight into it, but most people will have to put a fair bit of effort into getting to grips with the game. That said, if you take the trouble,** Surfchamp **can be a lot of fun, and could teach a lot about the sport it simulates. With a bit more attention to presentation, New Concepts could have had an excellent product. "**

● " Surfchamp *is essentially a good game. According to the packaging, the game is compatible with the Spectrum Plus, but I had problems getting the two to work together — if you own a Plus, try the surfboard first! Sound could have been used much better that it is, but graphics are well above average, although a little disappointing on the beach, and colour is all it should be. If you like surfing, or have your heart set on getting this novel game, then by all means nip down to the shop. Otherwise, think about it — the game is worth the asking price, but a few people may be put off by the price tag. "*

● " Reading instructions, especially long winded ones, is something I try to avoid. I had to resist the temptation to dive into *Surfchamp* head first as it is impossible to get started unless you study the instructions very carefully. Even after reading the leaflet and looking at the instruction program on side two of the tape I found it difficult to get into the game. Graphically, I found the game a bit disappointing — there's a fair amount of colour clash and your character isn't exceptionally animated. There is no sound, which is a pity as the noise of the odd wave crashing over the beach would have added to the atmosphere. Generally, I wouldn't recommend *Surfchamp* unless you are the sort of person who likes to get really involved in a game. You need to stick with this one before you have fun. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: CAPS and 1 to paddle out, 2 to catch wave and stand, otherwise use surfboard
Joystick: N/A
Keyboard play: interesting . . .
Use of colour: not bad
Graphics: fairly good, though not slick
Sound: none
Skill levels: one
Screens: two surfing screens, plus introduction program
General rating: An interesting sports simulation if you're not put off before you start

Use of computer	73%
Graphics	66%
Playability	69%
Getting started	54%
Addictive qualities	66%
Value for money	65%
Overall	**64%**

FA CUP FOOTBALL

Producer: Virgin
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Kerian UK Ltd**

Virgin Games are confident that their new football simulation program is true to life. Sports journalist Tony Williams came up with the concept for the game, drawing upon his football knowledge gained as editor of the League Club Directory and the FA Non-League Directory. Tony studied the form of the football clubs which appear in *FA Cup Football* and devised a set of performance figures for them. Once Tony's data had been incorporated, the Football Association was shown the game. The FA found it so authentic, that the program carries the Football Association's endorsement.

The program follows the course of the FA Cup, and allows up to eight players to manage ten teams each. No less that 124 teams are included in the game, and if players don't find their favourite Non-League team amongst them, they can enter further clubs.

At the start of the game the number of players has to be input — one person can play against the computer — then players enter a two letter code which is used to identify them for the rest of the game. Taking it in turns, the budding managers select teams from the paged list displayed on screen until everyone has a full complement of ten sides and the competition begins.

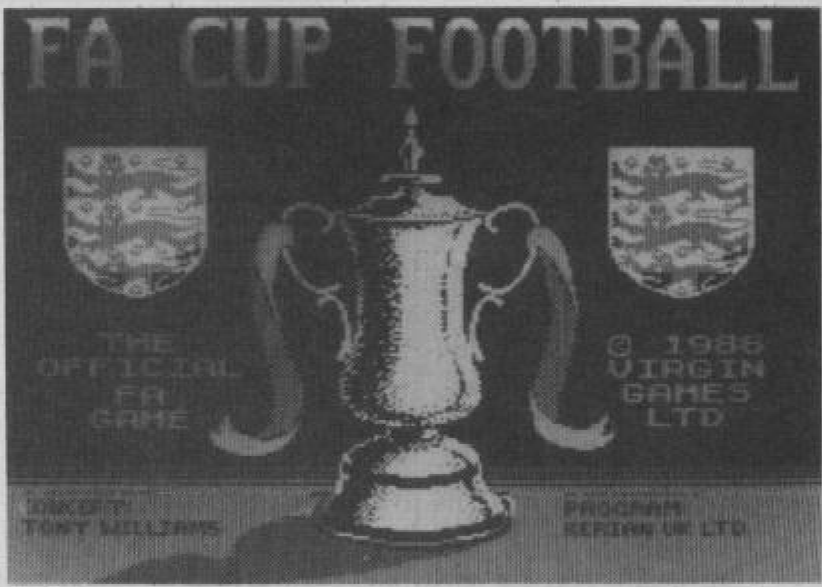
All the Cup matches can be played from scratch, or the players can opt to move straight to Round Three — when the First and Second Division clubs enter the competition, in which case the computer calculates which teams were defeated in the first two rounds.

Each round begins with the draw. Two discs bearing numbers corresponding to the clubs remaining in the contest roll across the screen. When they come to rest the names of the two teams they represent are added to the list of matches to be played in that round.

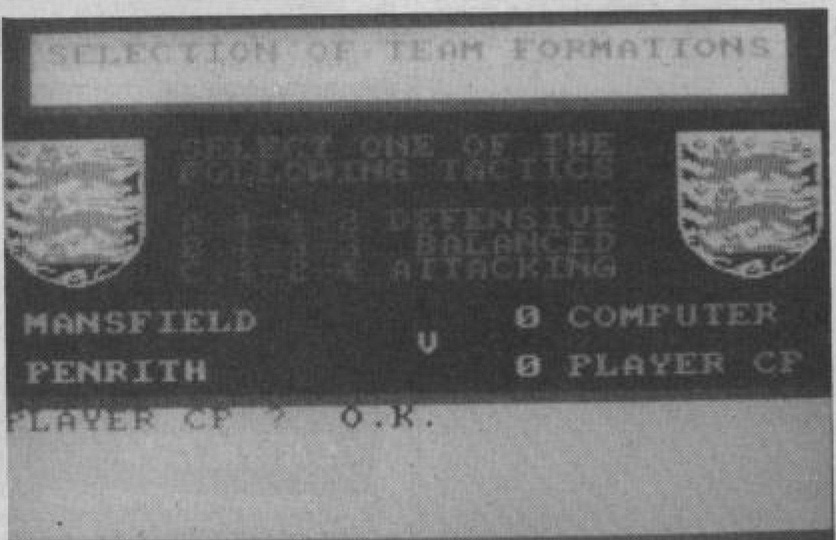
Before all the matches are played, managers have to chose their tactical approach to the games in which their teams are playing. Managers can encourage teams to play a Defensive, Balanced or Attacking game by selecting the appropriate key when the computer prompts them. Once all the tactics have been given to the computer, the matches kick off. The computer keeps track of the state of play, listing all the teams playing and updating the scores as goals go in.

The matches are played in accelerated time, as shown on a digital readout at the top of the screen, and the passage of time can be speeded up by pressing the SPACE key. In the first three rounds play continues to full time without interruption, but as the competition hots up more and more managerial decisions need to be made. In Round Four managers are given the option to change tactics at half time. In Round Five a tricky question is asked of every team's manager before play commences to test managerial ability, and a substitute can be played at three quarter time. Occasionally the option to look at a newsflash is given to the away teams's manager — if the news is viewed it may increase or decrease team morale.

In the last three Rounds managers have to deal with a barrage of tricky questions, update tactics at quarter, half and three-quarter time as well as decide whether to field substitutes. During the Final, updates on the pitch condition, humour of the crowd and the style and mood of the players are given at regular intervals during the match.



The pretty loading screen on FA CUP FOOTBALL from Virgin



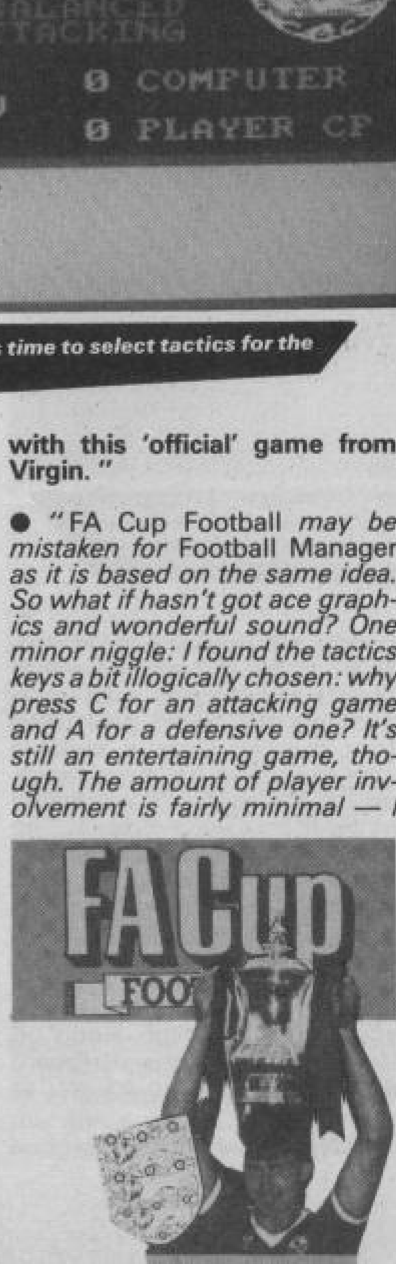
Mansfield play Penrith, and it's time to select tactics for the match in FA CUP FOOTBALL

CRITICISM

● "FA Cup Football **is a very well presented strategy game. The use of colour makes the screen display look attractive, and the graphics make what would have been an unexiting text-only game into a more pleasant one. The game itself is good fun to play, but is too easy when played alone. If you can play in a group, then do 'cos its a lot more fun with friends. Its nowhere near as involved as** Football Manager, **but it's good fun nevertheless, and football fans should be well pleased with this 'official' game from Virgin.** "

● "FA Cup Football *may be mistaken for* Football Manager *as it is based on the same idea. So what if hasn't got ace graphics and wonderful sound? One minor niggle: I found the tactics keys a bit illogically chosen: why press C for an attacking game and A for a defensive one? It's still an entertaining game, though. The amount of player involvement is fairly minimal — I have to admit that I wasn't hooked for a long period of time — but it's fun trying to get your teams to the Cup Final.* "

● " Although it's not particularly brilliant, *FA Cup Football* provides quite a bit of fun. It's almost theraputic in fact, just sitting there pressing the odd button occasionally and watching things happen. The graphics (what there are of them) are very nice and the whole game is excellently presented. For me *Football Manager* is still the definitive football game on the Spectrum, as it is more complicated and has more depth. This is more of a party game — it'd be great with a bunch of football mad friends — or perhaps one for the youngsters. Worth a whirl if you're nuts on footy. "



COMMENTS

Control keys: X to page the display of teams and matches, Q to continue to the next Round after Full Time, SPACE to increase the rate at which time passes, A selects defensive play, B for a balanced game, C for attacking game
Joystick: N/A
Keyboard play: follow the prompts
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: not a great deal, but what's there is well done
Sound: various beeps and a little tune at the final
Skill levels: one
Screens: one for each function
General rating: Well put together, but a simple game which might disappoint some people

Use of computer	65%
Graphics	64%
Playability	62%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	55%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**64%**



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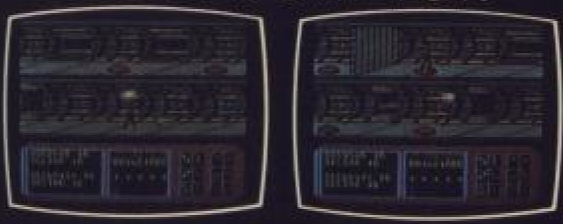
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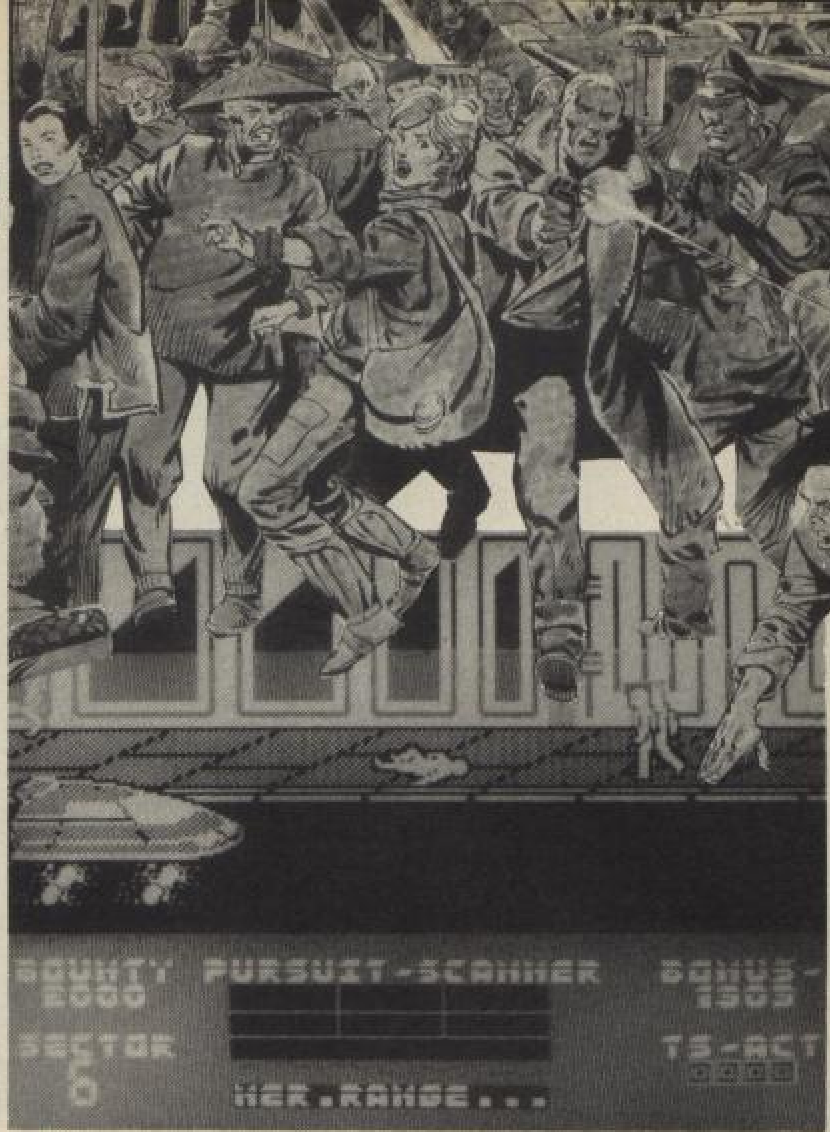
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The control panel of your Skimmer in BLADE RUNNER. The main panel displays a detailed map of the current city quadrant, while the smaller panel is a large scale map of the city

BLADE RUNNER

Producer: CRL
Retail price: **£8.95**
Author: **Andy Stoddart, Ian Foster**

In *Blade Runner* you play the part of a 21st century bounty hunter — a sort of futuristic Clint Eastwood who is on the track of replidroids. Replidroids are highly sophisticated robots that have been developed for use in hostile or dangerous environments and are used by humans as off-world slave labour.

Despite looking human and, for the most part, behaving just like humans, replidroids have been banned from Earth. They are manufactured in half a dozen grades, and the highest grade replidroid is superior to any human in terms of strength and agility, and at least as smart.

When the game begins, you're after the least harmful grade of replidroid, grade one, but as the the droids fall and the points clock up the set of replicants that you chase after gets nastier and nastier until the very unpleasant sixth level replidroids are your quarry.

The city to be patrolled is split into nine sectors; you are equipped with a gun and neat hover vehicle — a skimmer. The skimmer's viewscreen is divided into three areas: a detailed sector map, which displays an aerial view of the part of the city you are currently travelling over; a smaller mapscreen which highlights the sector in relation to the whole city, and a message window. Replidroids and their creators are shown on both the large scale viewscreen and the sector map by flashing graphics. As you move across a sector boundary the next map windows onto the main screen and the yellow highlighting block on the long range scanner moves position accordingly.

The aim of the game is to move your skimmer through the maze of streets that forms the city until it is above a replidroid on the run, and then land by pressing the fire button. The droids constantly hack around the teeming freeways and as your skimmer descends the display changes to a side-on view of the street you have landed in.

Landing is achieved automatically: the computer takes over and runs through an animation scene lasting about a minute which shows the skimmer gracefully setting itself on terra firma. Once you've landed it's time to persue your quarry on foot. A scanner along the bottom part of the screen shows the positions of both you and the droid, and looks three screens along the street.

Pedestrians and groundcars also use the roadway, and they're oblivious to your mission, perfectly happy to get in your way. Bumping into a pedestrian wastes time, while a collision with a vehicle is fatal. If the fugitive manages to race out of the scanner's eye then your skimmer returns to ground level to take you back to the map screen. If things get really frustrating, you can always shoot the innocent bystanders though, as this gets them out of the way rather efficiently!

The background scrolls from right to left, and a pseudo 3D effect allow you to move in and out of the gutter and onto the pavement. To retire the replidroid and earn the bounty points, you have to get directly behind it. One quick shot and the city is populated by one less malignant robot. The skimmer returns and the story continues.



At Street Level in BLADE RUNNER, with your skimmer about to take off as pedestrians wander past, unconcerned

CRITICISM

● " **At first sight** Blade Runner **seems to be a good little game, however, after a few goes it loses most of its appeal as there is very little gameplay. Once you've shot a few baddies and seen all the different streets there seems little point in going on any further. The graphics are a mixed bag: the characters generally all look the same apart from a variety of haircuts and hats — so even though the replidroid is going in the opposite direction to the rest of the pedestrians, it is often hard to spot. The streets contain neat details like posters and so on, but the scrolling is rather jerky. The only thing that really stands out about this game is the tune on the title screen.** "

● *'Yet another 'Game-of-the-film'! Not a bad one, either, despite the fact that it's the game of the soundtrack of the film. Only one thing stops it being excellent, and that is the fact that doesn't present much of a challenge. The instructions should have given more detail on the gameplay, as they do little more than set the scene for the game. The time it takes to begin to understand the game is more or less the time it takes to master it. The graphics are good, excellent on the pursuit screen, where you must 'retire' your replidroid. If you are a hardened arcade freak, looking for an easy but entertaining game, look at* Blade Runner. "

● " I felt there was something missing from the game, and not enough to do while I was playing — it's like a mini version of *Ghostbusters*. The plot's simple: find a replidroid, jump out of the skimmer and kill the replidroid. This turned out to be a very tedious job, as I found the game very slow to respond to joystick movements and even slower on the keyboard. *Bladerunner* might have been improved a bit if there weren't such long pauses between landing and taking off in your skimmer. CRL could have made a good game out of a great movie, but I'm afraid they've made a total hash of it. "

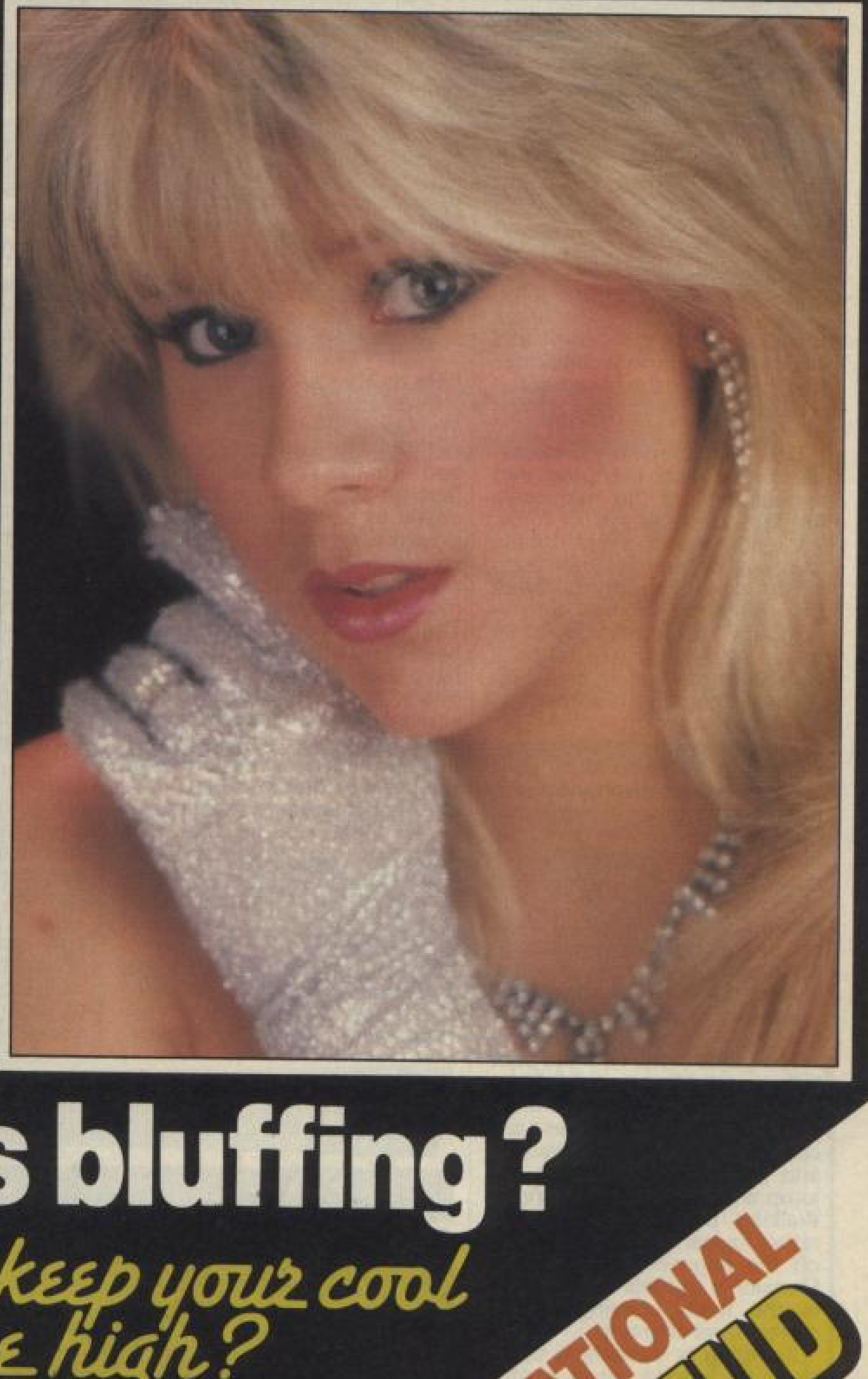
COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick:
Keyboard play: unresponsive
Use of colour: okay
Graphics: quite neat at times
Sound: excellent tune, little else
Skill levels: one
Screens: 2
General rating: A rather disappointing game, overall

Use of computer	63%
Graphics	63%
Playability	60%
Getting started	64%
Addictive qualities	53%
Value for money	49%
Overall	58%

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FRANK THE FLEA

Producer: Megasoft
Retail price: **£1.00 plus P&P**
Author: **Richard Welsh**

Poor old Frank, instead of his normal day to day grind of sucking blood from mammals and transmitting endemic typhus, he's got lost in Major Mansion. He wants his Mummy but the problem is that Major Mansion is a fairly large place. The only thing that Frank really knows is that Mumsie is somewhere on the second floor and that he is in the basement — a rather long way away in flea terms.

Unluckily, Frank is no eternal flea either and bumping into various bits of the mansion's furniture depletes his life force. If the poor insect is unfortunate to lose all his energy, then death is the reward, shortly followed by a burial by vacuum cleaner no doubt. This is definitely a fate to run away from. To be back with Mummy supping on a drop of rhesus negative is something worth striving for.

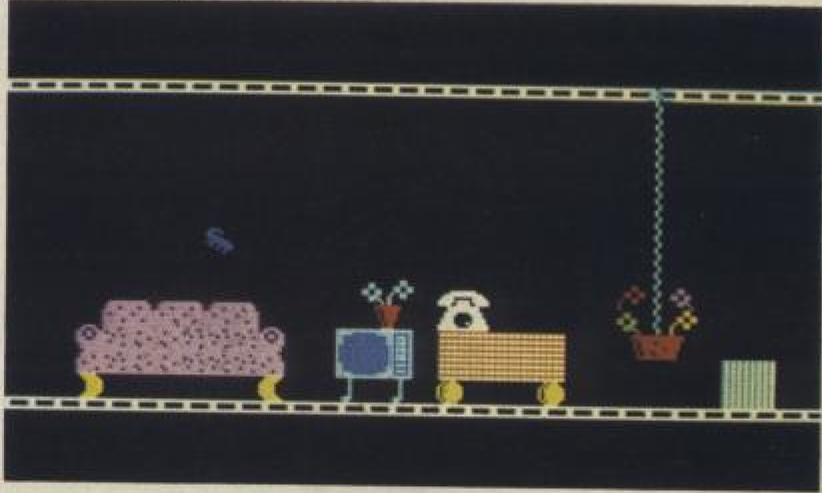
Each room is shown from a sideways view with Franky starting from the far left. Frank has to traverse the three screens that make up each floor to get to the flea lift that zooms him up a floor. Luckily for the program, each room takes up exactly one screen, and hopping of the edge of one room flicks another screen into view. On the last level a flashing Mummy flea waits for Frank instead of a flea lift.

The game starts with the poor little insectoid stuck in the basement sitting on a sofa. Frank's trusty little leg muscles can operate in two ways: in walking and jumping mode. Frank can jump and walk to left and right. Walking over furniture is all rather logical. If you guide Frank off the edge of one of Major Mansion's chattels then he falls to the floor, obeying all the correct laws of gravity.

Jumping is something to be carefully judged, since a misplaced leap almost certainly means a collision and a loss of life force — heading full pelt into a standard lamp or window ledge is a fairly major thing for a flea. Throughout the game Franky's flea status is indicated by his colour. The hue of the insect is also mimicked by the border: Frank starts on white and knock after knock slowly fades to blue. One knock after blue sends him floorwards and the poor little flealet discorporates.

If Mummy is reunited with her errant son then the program advises you to try a harder level where the life source provided is a lot less.

This is the first release from Megasoft, which is mainly Richard Welsh aged 14.92 years. Written entirely in BASIC, the program may well resurface in a faster form, once Richard has acquired a compiler — and two further releases are in the Megasoft pipeline already. Richard Welsh can be contacted at Five Springs, Guilsborough, Northampton, NN6 8QB.



Boing! goes Frank on his travels to be reunited with Mummy. FRANK THE FLEA from Megasoft

CRITICISM

" Ha,Ha,Ha a BASIC game! Gosh I haven't seen one of these since The Great Space Race. **Well, to tell you the truth, it's not that bad — in fact I quite enjoyed my first go and I was quite compelled to have another go. The graphics are exceptionally good considering they are in BASIC and the backgrounds are very nice, big jolly sofas and the like. The sound consists of a few beeps and a tune or two might have helped with the atmosphere, but I suspect it would slowed the game down somewhat. Generally I am well impressed with both the game and the programmer's ability. I recommend it strongly to everyone — it might not be the next mega-game but it will certainly cheer up a rainy afternoon. After all, for a quid you can't go wrong. "**

" Okay, so it's BASIC. All things considered, this is not a really bad game, but it's not a real mega-game either. The backdrops are colourful and quite attractive, though they don't exactly compare with something like Everyone's a Wally! *The main character, Frank, is small, unanimated, and extremely jerky. The game itself is reasonably good fun for a while, after which it starts to become a bit tedious and unexiting. For one pound though, you can hardly complain, because Megasoft are only making something like 40p profit, on mail-order sales, I presume. All things considered,* Frank the Flea *is quite a pleasantly styled game and may appeal to some, especially for the price. "*

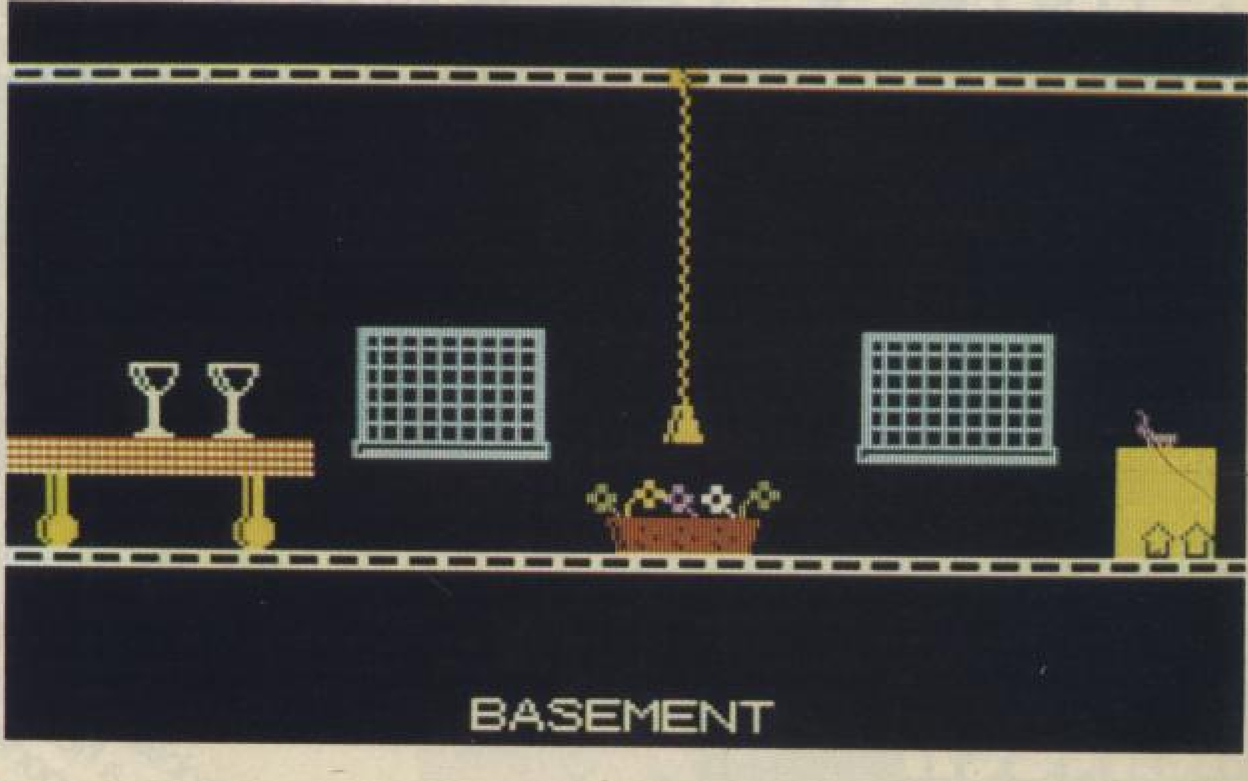
" When handed a Woolies cassette with a photocopied insert, I am a little dubious. When I load the tape and find out that the game's written in BASIC, I'm worried. It is therefore very pleasing to find on playing the game that it's actually been very well written. Frank hops around the screen in smooth arcs and, as fleas go, is quite convincing. The 12 rooms are all different, with good, clean graphics of household objects furnishing each location. The small amount of animation lent to Frank's movement and the lack of music can be attributed to the author's need to keep the game fast. *Frank The Flea* may not be able to compete in the mainstream software market but in the flea market it's one of the best pieces of budget software I've seen in a long time. Go on, send Richard a blank tape, a pound and a SAE . . . have some fun and contribute to the Megasoft Compiler fund! "

COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: N/A
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: simple, but neat
Graphics: simplistic
Sound: beeps
Skill levels: 3
Screens: 12
General rating: An interesting little game

Use of computer	**47%**
Graphics	**56%**
Playability	**56%**
Getting started	**63%**
Addictive qualities	**49%**
Value for money	**64%**
Overall	**57%**

It's not easy peasy being a flea. Furniture and fittings get in your way, and careful jumping is the order of the day in FRANK THE FLEA from Megasoft



BRIDGE PLAYER III

Producer: CP Software
Retail price: **£12.95**
Author: **Richard Wheen**

The tension mounts as the quiet click of fresh cards permeates the friendly but competitive atmosphere. This is Bridge, a game involving logic, conventions, and a complete understanding between the members of both the two teams, usually highlighted by a curious argot that is ineffable to the untrained listener and understood only by other Bridge players. Bridge is a card game dearly loved by many and probably loathed by the majority, it's also best played with three other equally matched people, but in lieu of other human players, a computer version can at least bridge the gap in a lonely person's life.

CP Software have already produced several such versions and *Bridge III* is the latest. It comes presented in a dual tape-sized box containing a single cassette and an 8-page instruction manual briefly covering the aims of the program and how it relates to the game. One thing becomes clear immediately, although a claim is made for the program's usefulness as a teaching aid, there is no way a beginner would learn about Bridge playing from either the program or the manual, and perhaps it would be unfair to expect that. As an aid in brushing up your play, it's obviously useful.

So much for the simple, onto the argot! The Acol system is the bidding convention used although it understands the Stayman and Blackwood conventions as well. Unfortunately the computer is no Omar Sharif, initiating neither of them, but it does bid in that system if asked to by the player.

You always play South, but if you win the contract with your partner (North) as the declarer, rather than sit and watch the computer take over, you can play your partner's hand as well as your own 'dummy' hand.

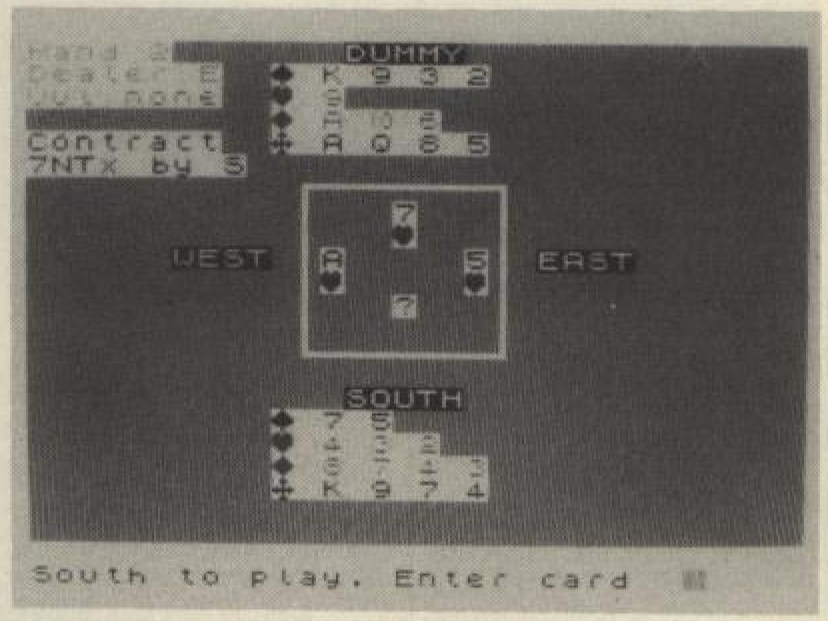
Bidding may be avoided if you prefer, although this removes most of the fun of the game. At the outset, after dealing, your hand is displayed on screen, and from this you must judge your bid and start responding to your partner's counter bids, or he to yours. Bids are simply entered and displayed as a figure and letter, thus two spades is 2S and four hearts is 4H. P to pass, D to double and R to redouble. A no-trump bid uses the letter N. In play the order is reversed, suit first followed by the card (A, K, Q, J for the royals, T for ten, and then numerals 9 to 2.

Hands of between 12-14 points are considered as being weak, strong being between 15-17 points or having variable no trumps. If bidding isn't required and you just want to get down to the game then a choice must be made between either seeing all the cards or just those of the player's hands. After this the screen displays whichever hands have been selected and asks you to choose the contract, so for example 2H would be a contract of two hearts. If all the cards are to be displayed then a final option allows the player to choose to play all four hands or just concentrate on his own, leaving the computer to play the other two.

Dealing begins from the North hand and rotates around the cardinal positions in much the normal way. Once a contract has been declared the screen changes to reveal the hands at their appropriate positions. Displayed on screen is the number of the hand being played, contract and the declarer along with the dealer, whether or not someone is vulnerable and the last trick played and who won it. The score of the current game in tricks is also displayed at the bottom left.

The program has a number of useful features, for instance, if a card is played and there is no choice but to follow suit with only one card then the computer automatically plays it for you. During play various things may be reviewed by entering B for bidding, E for earlier tricks or you can peep at your opponents' hands by entering P. After playing a card however this information is deleted. Claiming the rest of the tricks in a hand can be done by entering Z and in blind faith the computer attributes the rest of the tricks to you — it's well known that Bridge players never cheat! Recommencing play is done by pressing R. Finally, if you're the declarer and an opponent plays a trump (or 'ruff' as Omar would call it), then the computer civilly alerts you to the fact by beeping.

At the end of each hand the score is shown including any penalties, slams, honours or rubber points in the familiar way and a cumulative total is displayed. After a game there is the option of replaying that same hand but with renewed bidding, taking a hard copy to printer, or going straight on to the next hand. If you decide that during a game you don't wont to play any more or Omar walks in to the room and you feel distinctly embarrassed then you can abandon your current hand by pressing N or going back to the list of options by using O. A useful built in facility is to be able to load and save to microdrive. One bug seems to have crept through however, at one point, after creating four hands to play, the program crashed and revealed its protected BASIC program — F Vachha the protection's author will not be pleased.



Your hand as South as the bidding progresses — what bidding!? Gosh, Cameron, Lloyd Mangram can play a better Bridge hand than you can photograph!

There's no doubt that if you enjoy playing Bridge, that this program has its merits, but it seems doubtful that it can do much to convince the real novice, who is likely to find the whole business quite bewildering, and at its fairly high price, possibly offputting.
Garth

SODOV THE SORCEROR

Producer: Bug Byte
Retail price: **£2.95**
Author: **Tymac/Software Conversions Ltd**

A few years ago this game arrived on the Commodore with the rather tame title of *Gandalf*. Bug Byte have taken it out of the cupboard, dusted it down, converted it for the Spectrum, up-dated the title and scenario a bit and released it as a budget game.

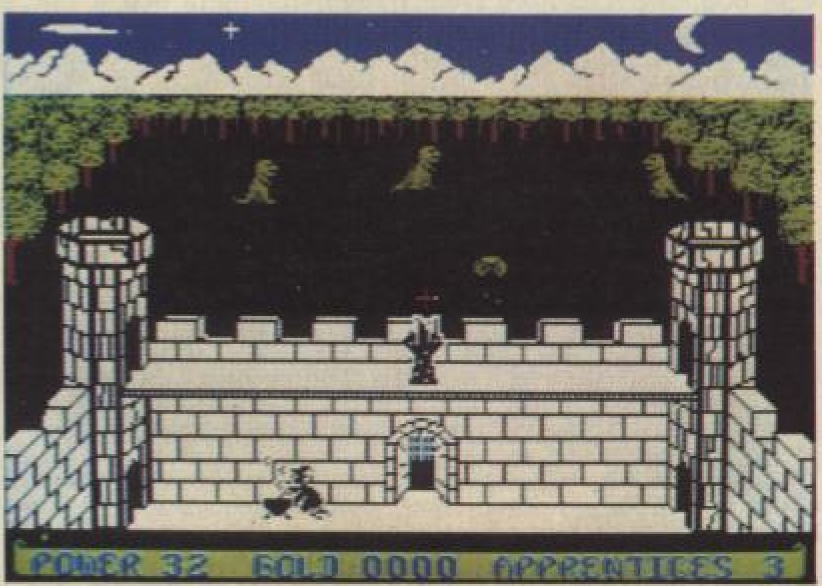
Sodov the wizard, in keeping with modern times, has abandoned the apprenticeship concept in favour of the Youth Opportunities Scheme. While he scampers around the battlements of his castle shouting magical spells which turn marauding green dragons into lumps of gold, Sodov's YOP stays in the castle courtyard stirring a cauldron.

The dragons, true to form, are fairly aggressive beasties. What they want is Sodov's YOP — a tasty morsel in dragon terms. The dragons scamper around the field outside the castle, trying to avoid Sodov's magical wrath as they run towards the castle walls to beat on the portcullis.

Sodov casts his spells using a *Mission Command* style crosshair cursor to aim his magic. He can scamper left and right along the battlements and along the castle floor by holding fire down with the appropritе direction key, entering the towers at the left and right of the screen to change levels. Each time a spell is cast Sodov loses some energy from the counter on the status bar at the bottom of the screen. More magical power can be drawn from the magic star in the firmament if Sodov goes to the top of one of the towers — providing the star's not covered by a cloud.

All is not in Sodov's favour, however. Every so often a mean red spider potters into the castle andscurries round. If it touches Sodov he loses magical energy, but he can take refuge from the red meanie by hiding in one of the towers until it goes away. The little cloud which scuds across the sky is more than a nuisance covering up the power star from time to time. It occasionally shoots a power-sapping bolt of lightning at Sodov, knocking off some of his energy points. And to add financial insult to magic injury, an ostrich turns up now and again in the field and pinches some dragon-gold!

When a certain number of dragons have made it to the walls, they manage to get the gate open and one of their number enters the castle and drags the YOP outside. While YOPS *are* fairly expendable — the wizard has three available — Sodov can choose to nip outside and mount a rescue attempt. Temptation lies in Sodov's path, however. Lumps of gold are to be found on the ground outside the castle — Condensed Dragon, produced by the wizard's defensive magic. Should he collect the loot or save the YOP? Decisions, decisions . . .



The first screen in SODOV, from Bug Byte. The Wiz turns dragons into gold from the battlements while the downtrodden YOP does the boring cauldron stirring down below



Collect the gold or save the YOP who's being dragged off to the kitchen in Chateau Dragon. Decision time for SODOV outside the castle

Out in the field, the wizard is vulnerable to dragon attack — they have particularly bad halitosis it seems, and a couple of puffs of Dragon Breath from close up kills the wizard, who explodes into the word 'DOOMED'. On the field screen, the wizard can lay mines in the path of the dragon that's got his YOP and is legging it towards the left of the screen. Sodov can only lay one mine at a time, and if he gets it in the wrong place it's a matter of waiting until a wandering dragon stumps over the mine before another one can be laid in the path of the abductor.

While waiting for a laid mine to explode, Sodov can scamper around gathering up the gold nuggets by walking over them. If the dragon dragging the YOP hits a mine, Sodov has a few moments to rush over to his little worker and lead him to safety before another dragon, seeing that lunch is about to escape, carries on the shopping and seizes the lad.

Should Sodov fail to rescue his YOP he gets to keep the gold anyway, and it's back to the castle and on with the game, one YOP down and plenty more where that one came from.

CRITICISM

● "**Apart from the obvious problem with the title,** Sodov **is an enjoyable game. Bearing in mind the price, it represents good value for money, and the graphics are quite neat. As to its lasting appeal, well, it depends on how much you like the game: you'll either hate it or love it. I fall into the latter category, I think. The sound isn't up to much, but the game doesn't need it. I can't see the sales for this running into the hundreds of thousands, but it may appeal to you — it appeals to me!**"

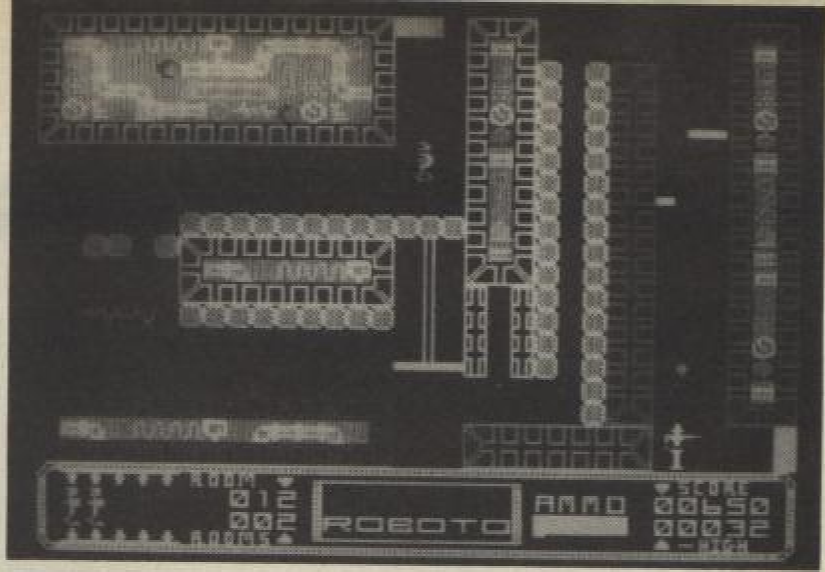
● *"I am well impressed with Bug Byte's latest release: it's very playable and quite compelling. I first saw this one ages ago on the C64 — then it was very good for its time and now it is just as good on the Spectrum, and also very cheap. Graphically this game is not brilliant but the characters are fairly well done and the 3D works well on the 3D screen. Sound is limited to a few burps and squawks here and there — a tune or two would have been appreciated. After a bit of practice I'd got quite good at this one, and I can't see myself getting bored for a couple of hours at least."*

● "I loved *Sodov*. It's a very simple, two screen game but it's a lot of fun to play, and makes a pleasant change from a diet of arcade adventures. The graphics are not stunningly detailed, but perfectly adequate nevertheless. I like the way the dragons blow up into little mushroom clouds when your spell zaps them. No music, a minimal scenario and only two screens to the game means it's not a super dooper hit. Plenty going on all the time you play, a neat challenge, humour, and the price all add up to a good deal. Get it."

COMMENTS

Control keys: O left, P right, Q up, A down to move sight, bottom Row to fire; Fire with direction key to move Sodov
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: using the sight is a bit tricky
Use of colour: pretty
Graphics: quite neat
Sound: passable tune at the start, little more
Skill levels: one
Screens: two
General rating: Bug Byte have put new life an old game, especially at this price!

Use of computer	**69%**
Graphics	**68%**
Playability	**74%**
Getting started	**72%**
Addictive qualities	**77%**
Value for money	**79%**
Overall	**74%**



Deary me, the future world isn't so nice after all, in fact it's a pretty hostile environment for an intrepid cybertechnician what with all the sliding doors and small but mean graphics.

ROBOTO

Producer: Bug-Byte
Retail price: **£2.95**
Author: **Eugene Smith**

Oh deary, deary me. You know when you wake up on a summer's day and you see the good old yellow smiling face of Mr Sun looming through the window at you and you feel all happy and warm. Well, dear reader, come 2086, when you're about 115 or so years old, he won't be there any more. Oh no, he'll be a tiny speck in space, all cold and miserable and you'll have to huddle around your electric fires. Well that's how it is, according to the future predicted by the latest Bug-Byte game.

Poor old mankind is huddled together in thermal knickers in a ghetto surrounding the last operational power station. Now, big problems have occurred — the station has started to malfunction and all the auto components are rampaging through the complex. With a power failure imminent you are elected to save the human race from freezing to death.

You see, you're the one and only remaining cybertechnician, the only person owning the ability to restore the power station to its proper working self. You're given a team of five working droids and are asked to deactivate all 51 sections of the station.

Roboto is a 51 flick-screen arcade adventure with arcade overtones. What the player has to do is to go round each of the sections (each section takes up a screen) and destroy the circular 'power orbs' found there. Each room has two or more exits and are all linked to form a map. You can pass through a room without shooting the orb, but ultimately they all have to be destroyed. The droid can move in four directions and also has a limited supply of bullets for shooting the orbs and any nasties occupying the locality. Occasionally, shooting an orb gives the droid extra bullets, and they're certainly needed!

The journey through the power station is made hazardous by sliding doors, electrified walls and sparks — all have to be avoided since one touch from any means the instant destruction of one of your five droids.

CRITICISM

● **'*Roboto* is a very simple game, fun to play, it has nothing in it, however, to catch your attention. It's very much like the very early cheapo Spectrum games — simple and short-lived. All the graphics are much too small to have any decent effect on the game's presentation and the sound is nothing more that a constant and monotonous buzz. The maze looks pretty boring as you move around it in a very wobbly fashion. Everything about *Roboto* is basic and it presents no really effective challenge to keep you at the keyboard or joystick for hours. I suppose this kind of game is alright for the younger users in the Spectrum market, but people who have been Spectrum owners for a time may quickly get fed up with this game.'**

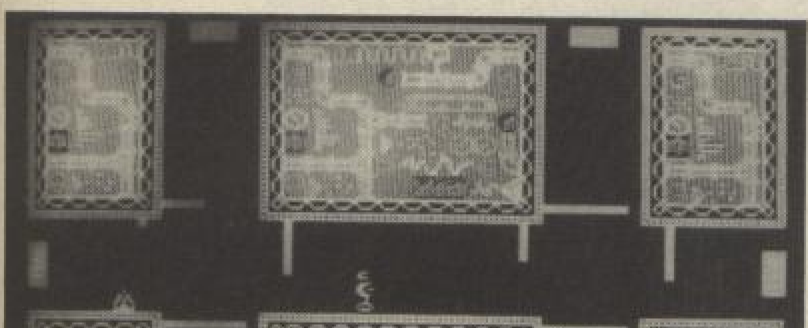
● '*Roboto* *is a fast arcade shoot em up from Bug-Byte and so far they have produced some good games (ie* Sodev the Sorcerer*). Although some of the screens may take some time to pass it's fun and playable. Some screens contain weird objects which must be overcome in order to progress. The graphics are good and detailed and there is a wide use of colour on many screens. A jolly tune greets you at the start and gets you into the game. If* Bug-Byte *can keep up the standard of games like these, then they are on the way to some Smashes soon. Next time you get three quid go out and get it.'*

● 'Lots of colour and good graphics make *Roboto* reasonably attractive initially, but as you progress through the game, it starts to get a little boring. It's quite easy to start off with, and soon you find yourself flying through loads of screens 'with the greatest of ease'. For the price, it represents pretty good value for money, but it fails to have any really long lasting appeal, possibly because it's so easy. If you're a hardened zap-paroony arcadian, it's probably not worth the effort, but it may appeal to some who want a simple, easy and attractive arcade game.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: O up, K down, Q left, W right P fire
Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston
Keyboard play: not wonderful
Use of colour: varied opinions settle for 'reasonable'
Graphics: small and uninspiring
Sound: there's a tune but generally sound is poor
Skill levels: one
Screens: 51
General rating: simple, but cheap arcade adventure

Use of computer 58%
Graphics 48%
Playability 59%
Getting started 64%
Addictive qualities 61%
Value for money 63%
Overall 58%



DEVIL'S CROWN

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail price: **£1.99**
Author:
B O'Shaughnessy

Legend tells of a wrecked pirate galleon containing a priceless crown. A demon murdered the crew and sunk the ship, claiming the crown for itself. You've located the sunken ship and set out to explore it, aiming to claim the famed *Devil's Crown*.

Understandably, the devil hasn't left his crown totally unguarded. His evil influence has attracted a host of nasty creatures to the wreck and anyone venturing into the galleon is attacked by the evil beings that now lurk in its dank chambers.

Escape from the wreck is impossible without the power of the *Devil's Crown* behind you. To make matters worse, the seven jewels that made the centerpiece of the crown have been scattered and hidden throughout the ship. The crown's casing, by itself, is useless. Reassembling Lord Foul's tiara is not easy. Each jewel can be retrieved by replacing the several etheral flashing objects around the ship with their corporate opposites found elsewhere. The trouble is, you're only able to carry one object at any given time and this does cause problems. Find the seven jewels, however, reassemble the crown and freedom and untold wealth are yours.

You're equipped with a bullet-fed gun and a scuba duper underwater vehicle. It's a sort of underwater equivalent of a vespa scooter, a handy little runaround powered by a couple of powerful turbines which can be used to drive it in four directions. Leaving the controls central lets the aqua vespa drop downwards under gravity's influence. Fire activates a bullet gun in your non droppable inventory. The supply of bullets is finite, and to keep shooting, extra ammo has to be collected. Bullet caches are shown by a little gun — a quick jab on the collect key collects the ammunition when you are over a gun, and the bullet—o—meter is put back up to fifty.

Only one object can be carried at a time, so when an item is picked up the current item in the inventory is dropped in place of the new acquisition. Vital items, like bullets and oxygen collected from tanks don't clog up the inventory, but boost their respective meters.

A bar along the bottom of the screen shows the oxygen level in your craft's tanks and killer fish do their best to deplete your supply. Float into a room containing one of these creatures with a full tank of oxygen, and the aquatic nasty makes a bee line for your airsupply. If the fish reaches you, the oxygen counter hits near rock bottom after which the fish drifts away disinterested. Let fly the odd bullet in its direction and, cowardly beast that it is, the fish immediately retreats. Hit it and it explodes. Pirate Ghosts are also worth avoiding, and once again, a well-aimed bullet removes them.

The ship contains forty chambers and at least one door leads out of each room. There are no security problems — all the doors are unlocked and open automatically when you move into them, flipping the next screen into view. Some of the rooms are particularly hazardous since they are in total darkness. Luckily there's an underwater lamp to be found, and carrying it into a darkened room has the required effect.

But then what do you expect to be up against? Nicking jewellry from demons isn't like taking candy from babies, after all.



In the gunpowder stores, carrying a helmet and shield with a killer fish lurking on the left of the screen.



Yo Ho Ho and a crownful of jewels. Underwater in the Great Cabin, just above the oxygen bottles — good job too, your hero has nearly run out of air. DEVIL's CROWN from Mastertronic



CRITICISM

● **" I've seen too many games like this (especially from Mastertronic) and they bore me. Controlling your craft is a little difficult to get used to as gravity affects it and you have to pay constant attention to avoid drifting off course. Shooting things is a problem too, as you have to be moving left or right as you pull the trigger. The graphics are large and fairly well detailed but they are a mite jerky at times; also the backgrounds are often garish. Sound is poor, merely a few beeps here and there. Generally, even at the price, I wouldn't recomend this one much as there are plenty of better games along the same lines. "**

● *" For Mastertronic* The Devil's Crown *is nothing really exceptional compared to their usual product, but then again it's not bad and can present quite a challenge to dedicted arcade adventurers. Gamewise it's nothing astounding, just predictable and conforming quite rigidly to the ideas behind many games that have gone before it. The graphics are not of a very astounding sort, just adequate really, though there's the odd nice touch. Overall a not very exciting release just a continuation of what Mastertronic does best. Some people may well like it. "*

● " Oh dear! Why can't all Mastertronic games be of the high quality of *Spellbound*? *Devil's Crown* has got some good graphics, is very colourful and occupies a reasonably sized playing area, but these features don't make the game fun to play; in fact, it's quite boring after a while. Mapping freaks may enjoy testing their skills on this one, but the average person probably wouldn't like it that much. Good fun for a while, but I don't think it'll last for very long in anyone's favorite games list — certainly not in mine. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: A left, S right, O up, L down, CAPS SHIFT fire, ENTER to pause, Q to quit
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Protek
Keyboard play: reasonable
Use of colour: a bit garish at times
Graphics: nothing remarkable, really
Sound: okay
Skill levels: one
Screens: 40
General rating: Not a bad game at the price, but nothing special

Use of computer	**50%**
Graphics	**61%**
Playability	**54%**
Getting started	**53%**
Addictive qualities	**52%**
Value for money	**64%**
Overall	**54%**

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ALIEN 8

Long long ago ... in a distant galaxy, on a distant dying planet, the last of the guardians prepare their starship for its final journey. All of the libraries, records and knowledge have been stored aboard the vessel, along with the very best of their cryogenically preserved race. The planet's final end draws near as the last, most vital piece of equipment is loaded aboard, activated, and the hatchways closed. The ULTIMATE evolution ALIEN 8 cybot whirrs into an artificial cybernetic rush of intelligence.
All hatchways are sealed, as the starship prepares for its long uninterrupted journey into the inky void of space.



SPY HUNTER

The official home version of Bally Midway's 1st arcade hit.

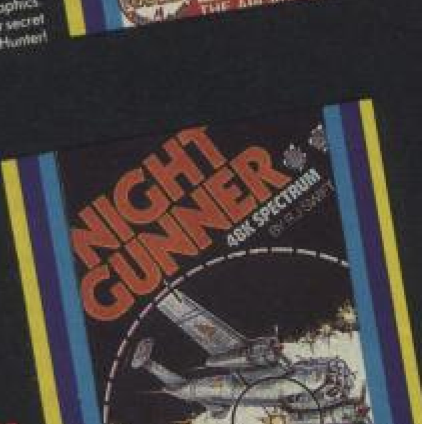
- You control the turbo charged race car/hydro spy boat.
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Reviews

GERRY THE GERM

Producer: Firebird
Retail price: **£9.95**
Author: **MD Software**

Have you ever been ill and wondered what exactly was going wrong with your poor little body? Sitting there sweating, head throbbing, stomach making horrible gurgly noises and all that sort of thing. Playing *Gerry the Germ* might help throw some light on the subject of diseases and how they affect you. On the other hand — it might not!

Gerry, the hero of this piece, has been thrown out of the Ill-stitute of Infectology for failing to get his stinkploma . . . he's out on the street, no money, a bacteria and a colony of viruses to support. Most ordinary germs would be defeated by this crushing blow, but not Gerry. He's a fighter, a rebel, a rapscallion and he's going to show the world that he's the best by infecting an entire human body on his own.

You play the part of that heroic, teensy-weensy little germ, and have to successfully infect six regions of your reluctant host's body. The playing area spans six separate screens, one for each part of the body Gerry has to attack — and should he fail at any stage it's back to the beginning. Counters on the status screen and a thermometer monitor your progress as you spread your pestilential influence through your host.

Gerry starts his quest in the lungs (coughs and sneezes spread diseases). Four red blood corpuscles perform a square-dance in the middle of the lung screen and every time they cross, a bottle of oxygen is produced which Gerry has to collect. Starve the lungs of oxygen for long enough and they become diseased and it's time to whizz down a handy vein to the kidneys.

To wreak havoc in the kidneys, Gerry has to eat as many kidney beans as he can and then go to the toilet to cause kidney failure. Antibodies floating about the screen in the form of a plunger and toilet attendant make Gerry's life difficult, and he must avoid red and white cells if he's to succeed. The kidney beans aren't too keen on being scoffed either, and have a habit of running off the screen.

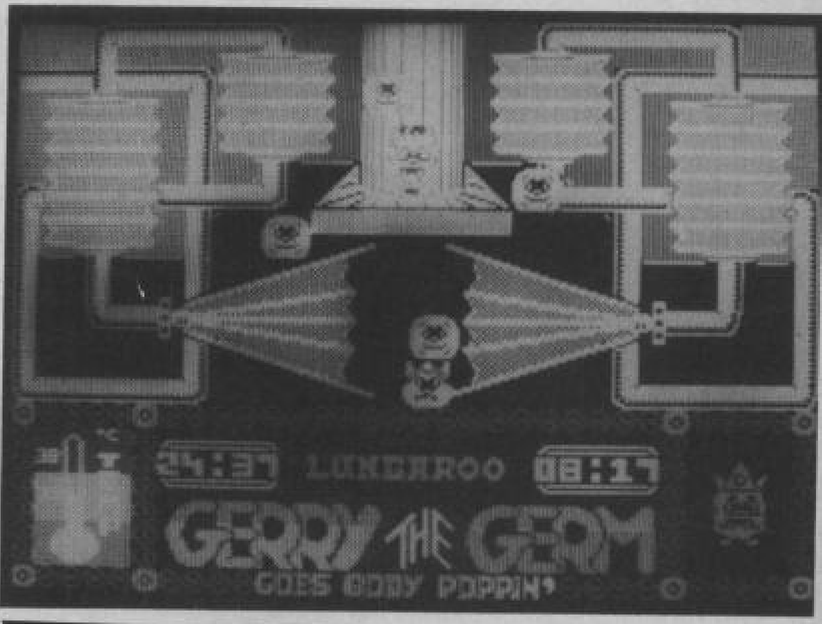
The bladder is the next port of call, and it's a sea of liquid, authentically enough. Gerry has acquired a little rowing boat in which he rows around. A bull and a cockerel swim around and can overturn Gerry's boat, tipping him in the drink and turning him into a piece of bladder wreck. Fortunately Gerry isn't defenceless: he can pick up a toilet roll and hurl it at a nasty, stunning it and sending it to the bottom of the bladder sea for a while. The aim of the bladder game is to land on the island — the loo roll can be used to block a dripping tap and thus control the liquid level. After the bladder it's on to the stomach or back to the lungs, depending on whether you succeed or fail.

Lots of nasties trundle their way around the stomach — a tapeworm, a gas pocket and lots of healthy food. Some stun, others shunt you about the screen so care is needed to complete the infecting. Gerry has to dissolve Mr Aspirin, guardian of the exit who stops the stomach from going wrong. Mr Aspirin can be dissolved with the acid bottle that wanders around the screen, and once he's safely out of the way the stomach gets all acidic and packs up.

The next stop is the pancreas, which looks rather like the inside of a train. The screen is split into two, one half representing the inside of a railway carriage and the other the driver's compartment, where a fireman and driver beaver away. The aim is to infect the medical supplies in the carriage. Gerry's touch is enough to infect the medicines, but he has to watch out for mean white cells, ticket inspectors and deodorants while he bounces around. Once the medical supplies have been ruined Gerry has to stop the train, by climbing unseen into the driver's compartment and lobbing coal at the driver to start a fight between the driver and his fireman!

In order to complete the game and prove to his fellow germs that he's a jolly infectious fellow, Gerry needs to get to the heart and inflict a massive coronary by dodging the defensive antibodies and turning their fire onto the heart itself.

Careful how you play the game — Gerry could grow on you . . .



Gerry tries to get the bubbly bottles of oxygen away from the red corpuscles in the lungs. GERRY THE GERM takes infection to new heights



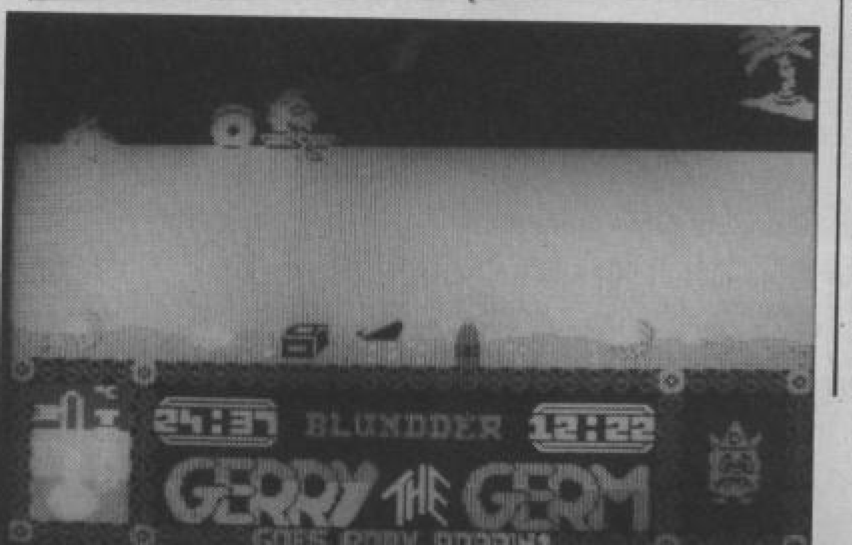
CRITICISM

● **" Great, I thought, loading up** Gerry the Germ, **having read the fab cartoon instructions. It loaded, and played an amusing tune. I started on the game: some neat graphics here! In fact, I was all set to give it a really nice review. After ten minutes play I began to realise something was wrong. Soon I was really bored. Eventually, having played the game to my wit's end, I can say that I think Firebird have ruined what could have been a really cool product by making it far, far too difficult. Someone's bound to say 'persevere, and you'll succeed', but quite honestly I don't have infinite patience. I'm not going to be coming back to this game for a long time because** Gerry the Germ **is really beginning to make me ill. "**

● *" Lots of lovely, witty ideas are contained in this game and its scenario. The presentation, from the packaging to the on screen graphics is very good. Sadly the game is let down by its sheer unplayability and rapidly became so frustrating I didn't want to continue. A nice try, which falls short of the mark by being so unplayable. "*

● 'The most notable thing about this game is its humour — although lavatorial in tone, the funny scenario has some very neat touches. The gameplay, however, is sadly lacking and the whole thing boils (!) down to being a rather dull six-screen arcady type game. The way it works is silly — once you've completed a screen you move onto the next one, and if you fail you have to complete the first screen again! This quickly becomes frustrating, especially when you don't know what to do on a new screen and consequently return to the first screen very swiftly. A lives system would have been much, much better. This game costs too much: there are some better releases in Firebird's Silver range. "

Rowing the boat on the slimy sea in the bladder. That liquorice allsort behind the boat is in fact a toilet roll, Gerry's main defensive device



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: reasonable
Use of colour: very cheerful, if that's the right word
Graphics: jolly
Sound: a nice little ditty on the title screen and a few spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: six
General rating: A lovely idea spoilt be being too difficult to play

Use of computer	67%
Graphics	75%
Playability	39%
Getting started	61%
Addictive qualities	45%
Value for money	32%
Overall	**45%**

HENRY'S HOARD

Producer: Alternative Software
Retail price: **£1.99**
Author: **M Brown & A Biggs**

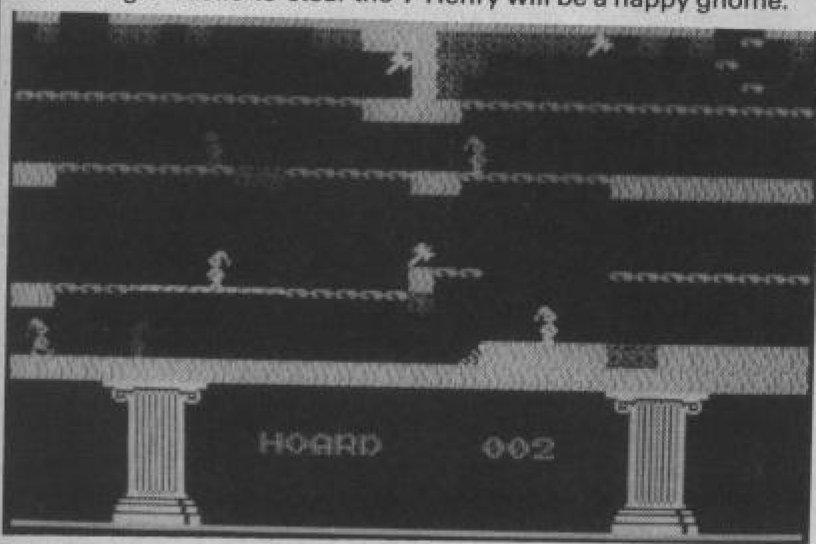
Henry is a gnome, who enjoys a reasonable life, but Henry is not a content gnome and feels he must achieve something. Motivated by greed, he's decided to go off to the Magic Castle to steal the Golden Hoard, a pile of treasure that is, logically enough, golden.

When Henry sets himself a task, it's usually an ambitious one, and this is no exception since the Magic Castle is guarded by lots of nasties with magical powers. Each section of the castle is represented within a screen and are fifty screens for Henry to make his way through.

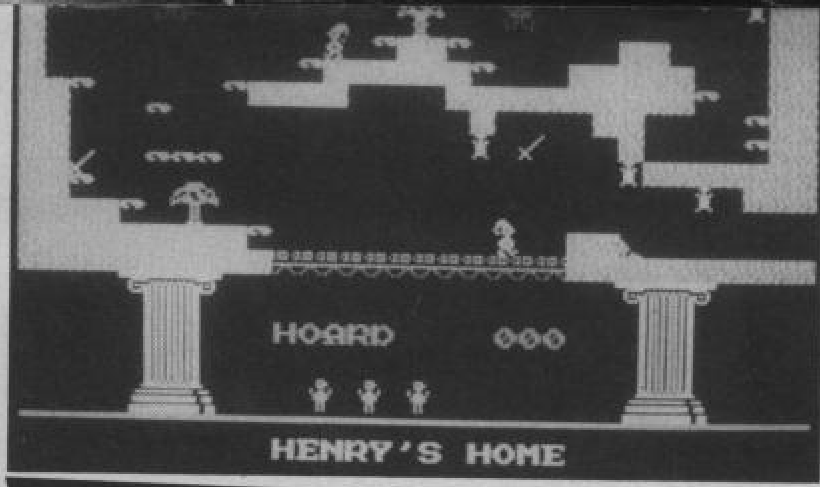
To complete his quest, the gnome from home needs to visit every room and collect over two hundred magical items on his journey. The nasties that hinder Henry include dastardly dwarves and not very nice elves; other baddies too foul to name also trot in and out the various caverns and sproing up and down from the ceiling.

The format of the game closely resembles the one originally used in *Jet Set Willy*: Henry can walk left and right and can jump. The main difference is Henry's gait his way of getting about is rather strange. Instead of the usual platform game type regular stroll, Henry staggers along as if he's been hitting too much of the Gnome Juice. The screens are all platform orientated with a number of baddies patrolling mindlessly along their predefined routes. They pay no attention to your presence on a screen, but they object to Henry very strongly if you are clumsy enough to guide the poor gnome into one of them, and bump him off. You are allowed five lives — the Henries remaining jump up and down in a window at the bottom of the screen.

As an added bonus, entering some of the trickier screens returns a fresh complement of six bouncing Henries to the status bar along the lower bit of the screen. So keep the Henries bouncing and the pieces of Hoard flowing in and soon Henry will be a happy gnome.



Just one gathering of specific nasties that you'll encounter if you try to pilot Henry towards that ever-elusive hoard.



Setting out from home, Henry's got a whole lot of treasure to collect in HENRY's HOARD from Alternative Software

CRITICISM

●" Not another Wet Set Jelly clone! BUT, it's not all bad. A nice platform game does you good, especially when it only costs £1.99. Henry's Hoard **is good fun to play, and colour and graphics have been used quite well in the design of the game screens. There's quite a pleasant continuous tune (thoughtfully provided with an on/off switch in case it gets on your nerves) and when you've finished, it plays a neat rendition of 'When the Saints Go Marching In . Okay, all you anti-platform-game people, you might not like it, but I do, because it's cheap, challenging (a bit!), fun, and generally quite good all round. So there. "**

●" *Why is it that budget software houses equate reasonable product with* Jet Set Willy *clones? The last month or so has seen a deluge of cheap games trying to re—evoke the success of their famous forbear. I wouldn't mind so much if they tended to be better, but they're not: they're all inferior.* Henry's Hoard *is such a game, and is so typical of what some software manufacturers still think 'the kids' want. It's graphically pleasant enough, and not a really bad game. I'm sick of being fed the same type of game, time after time. I wouldn't buy* Henry's Hoard *but others may well like it. It's competent enough at what it does, I'm fed up with this sort of game. "*

●" Why this new company should choose to call themselves 'Alternative Software' beats me, unless they intend to offer alternative versions of classic games years after they've come and gone. *Henry's Hoard* is an alternative to *Jet Set Willy*, or maybe *Manic Miner* and will no doubt satisfy *JSW* fans who are desperate for a fix of their favourite platform action. For a couple of pounds this game is a reasonable deal—and it's clear that a fair amount of effort has gone into creating it. I'm just sorry the programmers didn't find something a bit more original to write, but there you go. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: alternate on second row left/right, bottom row to jump, G toggles tune on and off
Joystick: N/A
Keyboard play: every bit as good as *JSW*
Use of colour: nothing outstanding
Graphics: tidy, but tiny
Sound: neat tune, usual effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 50
General rating: Good value for money if you like this type of game

Use of computer	**68%**
Graphics	**65%**
Playability	**60%**
Getting started	**70%**
Addictive qualities	**59%**
Value for money	**74%**
Overall	**65%**

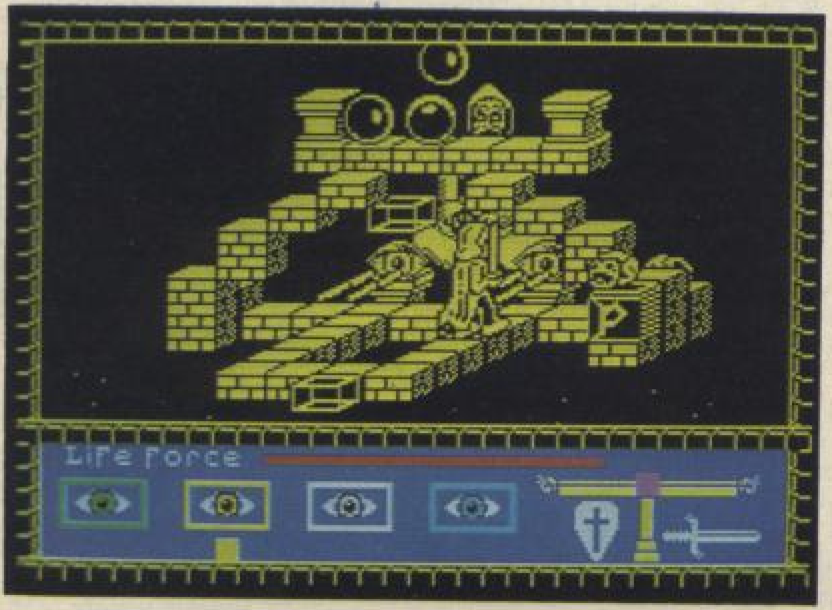
RASPUTIN

Producer: Firebird
Retail price: **£9.95**
Author: **Paul Hibbard**

The spirit of that evil monk, Rasputin, is back. Not content with terrorising Russians and Catherine the Great, not entirely happy with being the subject of a Bony M song, Rasputin now appears in a computer game. Drawing power from the Jewel of the Seven Planets and protected by eight spells which have been cast in his name, Rasputin is threatening to cross the barriers of time and do all sorts of unpleasant and nameless nasty things. It's up to you to intervene.

status screen. When you run out of energy the game ends, and it's back to the courtyard of your dark side (where the game begins according to the instructions).

The action is shown in a 3D viewscreen which takes up three quarters of the display area, and the graphic style resembles that used in *Alien 8* and *Fairlight*. The Crusader's movements are also similarly controlled: he can spin round on the spot, walk and jump. First you select one of the eight directions available, turn your hero and then walk forwards. The M key raises the shield to stave off attack, while M and P together brings the sword into play. A little care is needed, as the P key on its own



In a room protected by Evil Eyes, your caped Crusader attempts to recover the runic 'P' on the right of the screen. Meanwhile RASPUTIN pops his ugly mug up from behind the stonework.

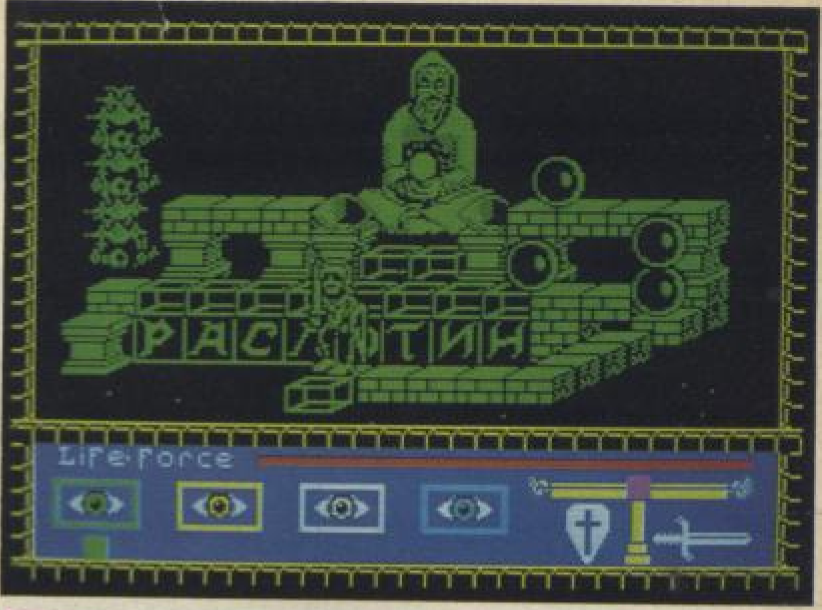
The playing area is a multi-roomed castle hovering in space/time, a nether world inhabited by evil creatures which sap your life force on contact. Some, like the guards which patrol doorways, seem relatively unconcerned by your arrival in their little section of the universe, while other nasties home in on the figure of your crusading knight and do their best to wipe him out.

The quest begins in a hallway from which the other locations which make up the Seven Planets may be accessed. Your Crusader is equipped with a magic shield and a magic sword, both efficacious when it comes to dealing with the denizens of doom — but their power is limited. Each time you use the magic weapons their power diminishes a little and the candle on the status screen used to indicate the power remaining in your weapons grows a little shorter. Contact with the nasties reduces your limited life force, as displayed by a horizontal bar on the

causes your hero to leap in the direction he's facing — make sure you don't jump at the enemy instead of poking it with a sword!

Since the courtyard of your darkside is a pretty strange place, it's not surprising that the scenery is strange. Most of the screens are made up from stone blocks suspended in infinity. Falling off a walkway due to carelessness sends you tumbling down to land on a cloud. Your hero is returned to the start of the room he fell from, but loses some energy in making the trip.

Travelling between screens is achieved by jumping onto one of the teleport blocks which causes another room to flick into view. The overall aim of the game is to collect the eight spell runes which have been inscribed on blocks of stone scattered in the playing area. Spells play a very important part in the game — on entering a room the spell it contains can be released by leaping on all the special blocks.



Your Crusader faces forwards, looking out from the centre of the screen which contains the jewels of power. Once you've collected the eight runic spells you can rescue the jewels on the left and put an end to RASPUTIN's evil plans

Once this has been done a monster materialises — kill the monster and you gain the spell.

Most of the spells are regenerative, topping up your energy or weapon status, but Eyes of Heaven spells are very important indeed. Each of the eight runic spells you have to collect is protected by a evil eye controlled by Rasputin's spirit. When you collect an Eye of Heaven spell one of the four Spell Harmony Indicators in the status panel indicates the colour of the room in which your Eye of Heaven Spell is active. On entering a room of the appropriate colour, the eye it contains is deactivated and you can collect the rune it defends.

Once all eight runes have been collected your Crusader will be able to collect the Jewel of the Seven Planets and put an end to Rasputin's evil plans for ever. Rah Rah Rasputin . . .

CRITICISM

● " Rasputin **is an arcade adventure type game based a bit on** Knight Lore **and** Alien 8 **in that each screen is presented in a single colour. The graphics are brilliantly drawn in 3D and are easy to recognise, although the single colour approach can get a bit dull. Sound is well used. I liked the idea of raising you on a cloud when you take a tumble. At first it was hard to move around the screens, but when I got used to the game I found it quite addictive. Another good game which is fun to play from Firebird. "**

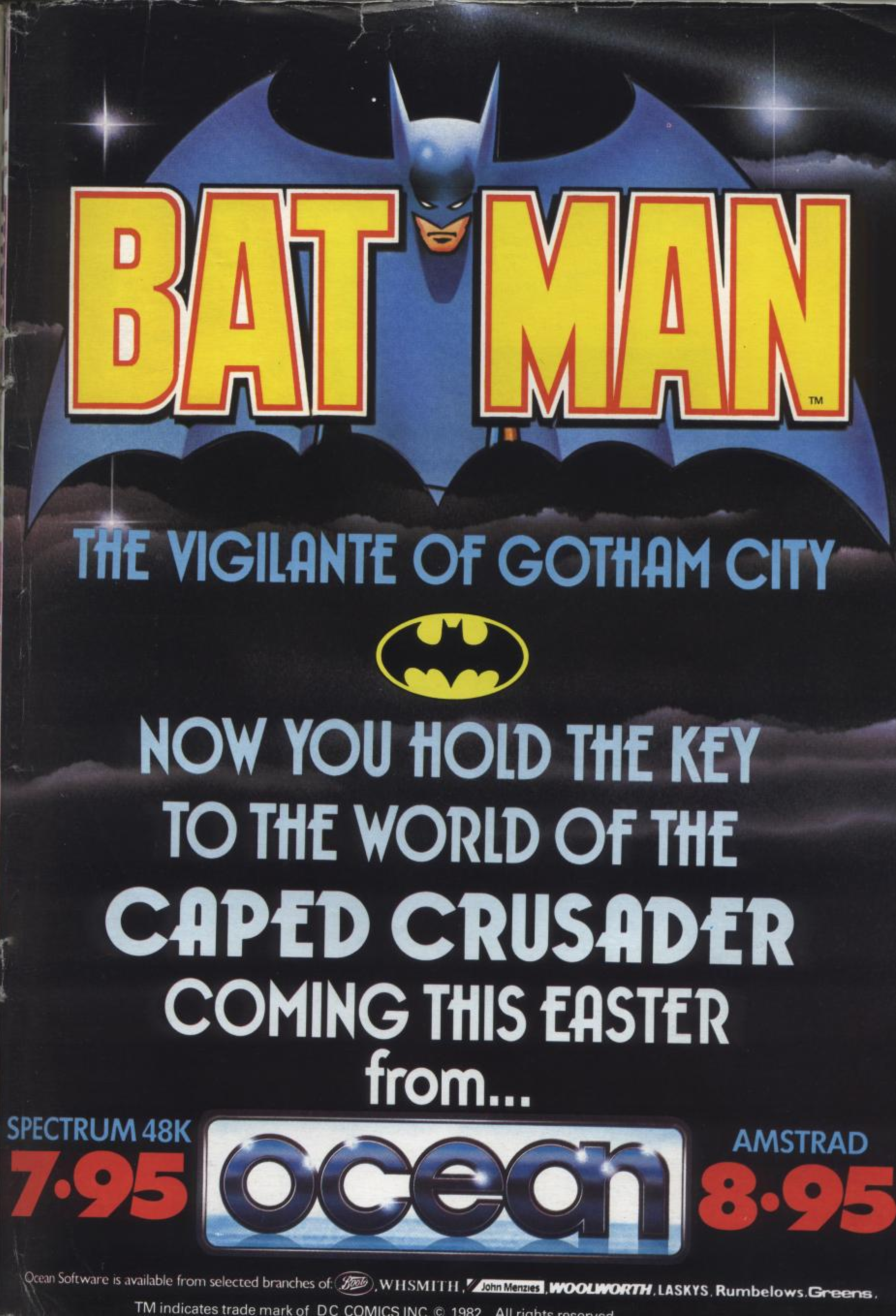
● *" At first sight* Rasputin *looks as if it could be excellent: it has fantastic graphics and a very good tune. The only gripe I have about it is that it's not as playable or addictive as it could be. Graphically, I'd say that this rivals Ultimate's filmation games — there is always a lot happening on the screen, plenty of nasties bouncing around, moving stars, fire from the odd dragon and the like. The sound is also very good — lots of beep effects during the game and an excellent tune on the title screen. If found it very hard to get into the spirit of this game, so after a few goes I was beginning to loathe it. Also I found it very hard to accomplish anything, so it's not a compelling game to play. If you like pretty graphics and nice tunes, then this perhaps is a game for you. If you want a game to get your teeth into immediately, then perhaps not. "*

● " *Rasputin* didn't exactly melt my joystick when I was playing it, but I did feel it held some promise. The high price put me off quite a bit — after all, it's only another variation on the *Knight Lore* theme. The graphics are nicely animated, but the tunes are apalling and tend to buzz on for far too long. One of its good points is that the screen does not slow down, which results in a very playable game with something to do in every screen: a quality lacking from a lot of games around at the moment. I found *Rasputin* very good fun to play, but even after 30 minutes, I never felt that I had got into the main game. This could be a bit late to make its mark in the monochromatic games market — *Chimera* might be a better buy. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q turn left, W turn right, O walk, P jump, M use shield, M and P use sword, SPACE to pause, ENTER to continue
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: fine
Use of colour: monochromatic rooms hence no clashes
Graphics: neat animation and good 3D effect
Sound: excellent theme tune at start, otherwise blips
Skill levels: 1
Screens: 48
General rating: A complex 3D game which should appeal to fans of the genre

Use of computer	**77%**
Graphics	**87%**
Playability	**81%**
Getting started	**72%**
Addictive qualities	**78%**
Value for money	**79%**
Overall	**79%**


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